HEAVY METAL

May 1977
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FURTHER...

Early returns from *HM* #1? "I thought it was a rock music mag." Uh-huh. This response from persons who had assumed *Rolling Stone* was a geology report...

Otherwise, here we are putting out #2 without info abt #1's success, effects, whatever...

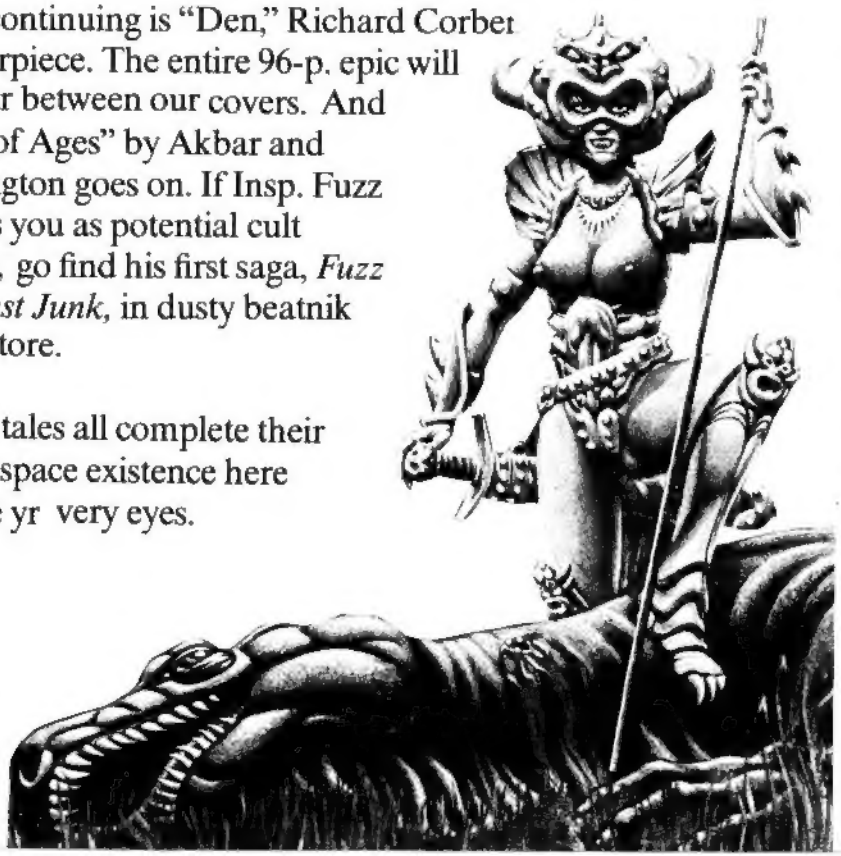
(This written in Feb, FYI, not before Apr, re Mar. We'll know yr reaction in July. Global Village, my ft.)

Inside, we continue the adventures of "Sunpot," as made by the ex-mortal Vaughn Bodé. "Sunpot" was done in b&w, and issued as obscure underground comic. We asked Jack Adler to color them as lovingly as Vaughn might have. Sixteen pages to come in future issues, so don't touch that dial.

Sword and sorcery tale "Yriss" concludes herein. Those curious as to how our hero got into such a fix are urged to consult *HM* #1.

Also continuing is "Den," Richard Corben masterpiece. The entire 96-p. epic will appear between our covers. And "Age of Ages" by Akbar and Rubington goes on. If Insp. Fuzz strikes you as potential cult figure, go find his first saga, *Fuzz Against Junk*, in dusty beatnik bookstore.

Other tales all complete their time/space existence here before yr very eyes.



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HEAVY METAL

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Filled, of course, with incredible art and including an excerpt from the best-selling book, The Sword of Shannara.

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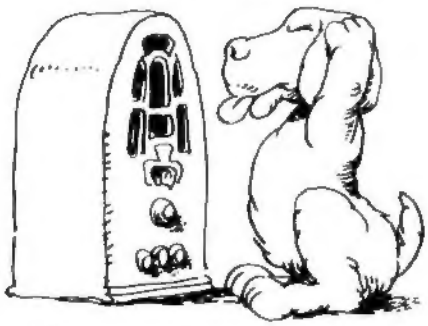
The end of the same old song.



No more gritting your teeth. No more aimless dial switching and button pushing. No more repetitive, tinny, raspy, juvenile, generally unexciting music.

We hear you.

Instead of playing all the new, exciting songs, some FM stations are playing all the new TOP 20 songs.

Which means that the same AM radio stuff you left behind in high school, is now coming back at you on FM. In stereo, no less.

Everybody likes to hear their favorite song. But nobody likes to hear it seventeen times in a day.

You're tired of it. We're tired of it. We hear you.

Everytime you've searched for something to listen to, we've heard you.

We've been listening to you for the last 10 months. We've heard what you liked. What you hated. What you thought a great radio station should be.

We've heard you.

Introducing FM 107. Old friends, with music and features that are better than ever.

On FM 107, you won't hear the same songs over and over.

What you'll hear, are Lynn McIntosh, Tom Curtis, Pete Larkin, Bill O'Connor, and John Lyon playing the best music in Washington.

The exciting music of today. As well as the great songs of the past decade or so. Some of them chartbusters. *All* of them songs that mean something.

These are some of the albums you'll be hearing songs from, on FM 107.

1. *"Hasten Down The Wind"* Linda Ronstadt
2. *"The Pretender"* Jackson Browne
3. *"Hotel California"* Eagles
4. *"Hejira"* Joni Mitchell
5. *"Night On The Town"* Rod Stewart
6. *"Boston"* Boston
7. *"33 1/3"* George Harrison
8. *"Songs In The Key of Life"* Stevie Wonder
9. *"Blue Moves"* Elton John
10. *"Wings Over America"* Wings
11. *"Silk Degrees"* Boz Scaggs
12. *"A New World Record"* E.L.O.
13. *"Fly Like An Eagle"* Steve Miller
14. *"Frampton Comes Alive"* Peter Frampton
15. *"Night Moves"* Bob Seger

On FM 107, you'll hear national and international news, presented every hour by the ABC News Bureau. And interesting, relevant local news, presented by FM 107's News Department.

You'll hear up-to-the-minute incisive sports reports featuring nationally-renowned sportswriter Jack Mann, every morning. And every afternoon with Redskin star Roy Jefferson.

On the weekends, FM 107 presents the most entertaining specials in town. Album previews with behind-the-scenes commentary. Interviews with today's top musical stars. Live rock and jazz concerts. Anything and everything that makes for good listening.

Good radio is more than one song after another. Good radio is something that makes you smile, and laugh, and think, and learn.

We've heard you. Now it's your turn.

Tune in FM 107, and hear what we're doing. You'll never hear the same old song again.

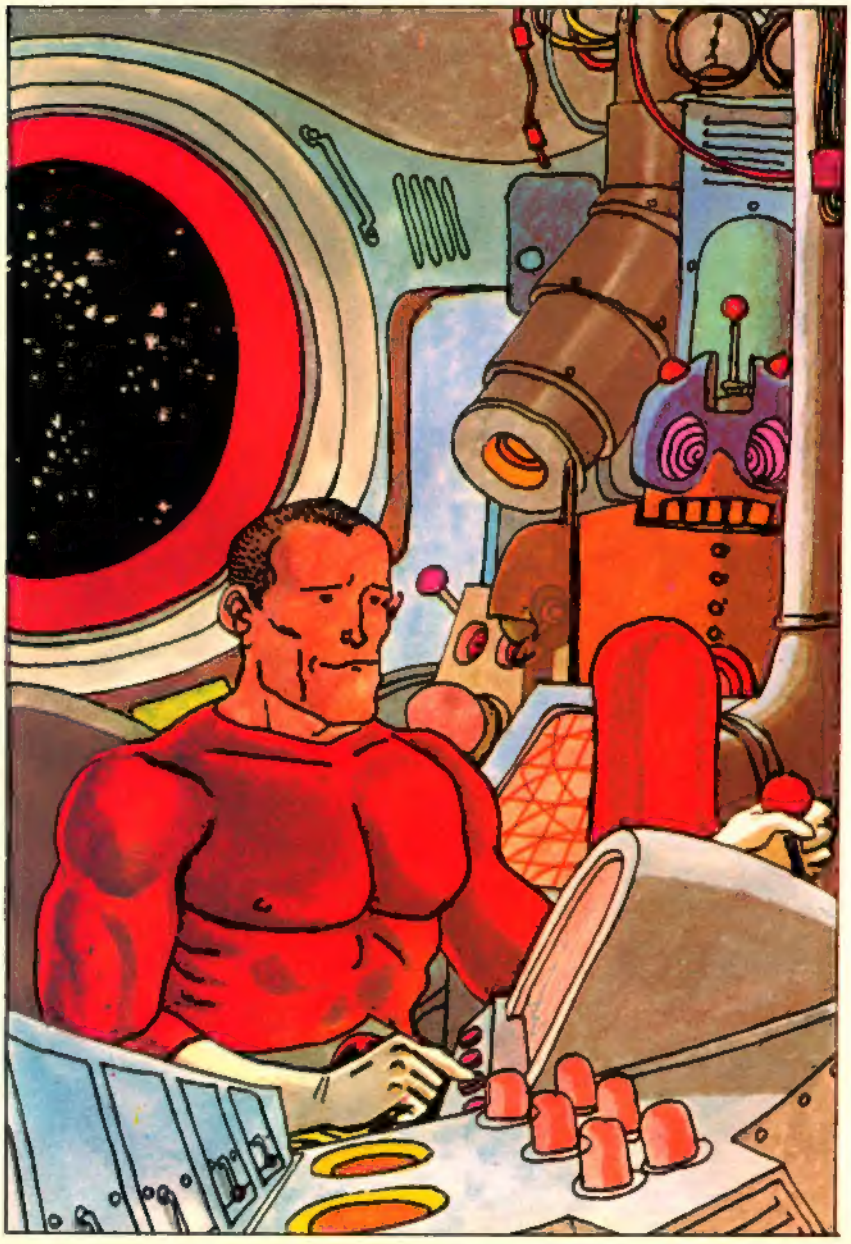
WMAL FM

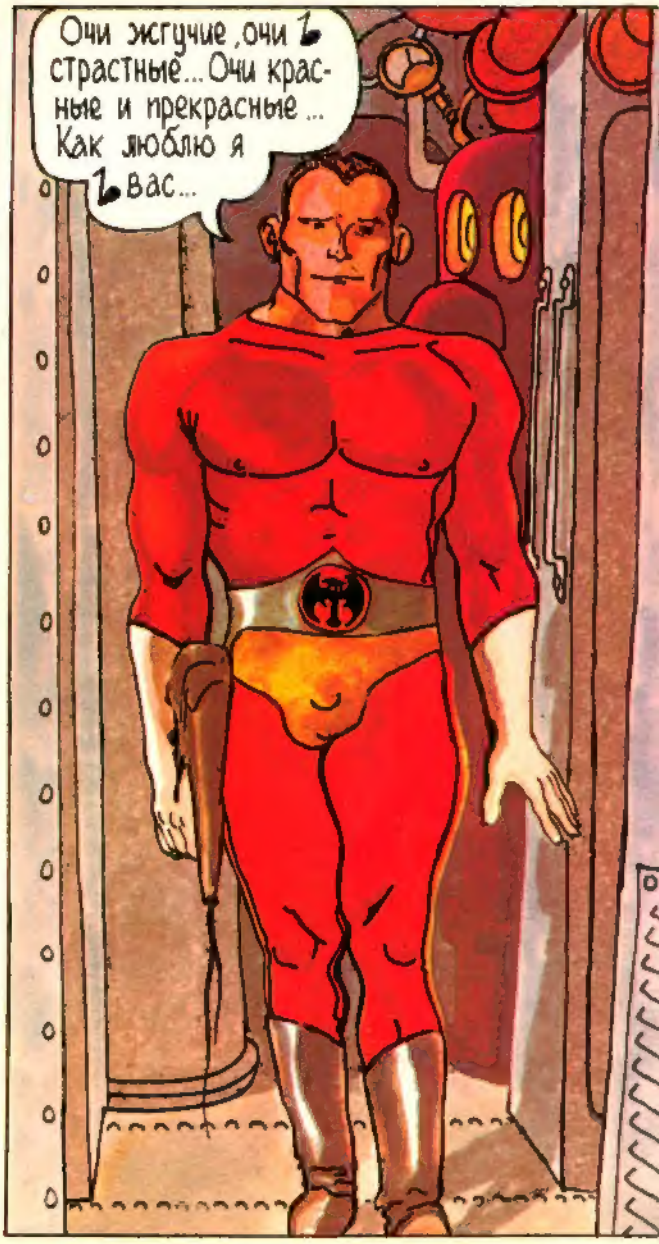
FM107

Washington, D.C.

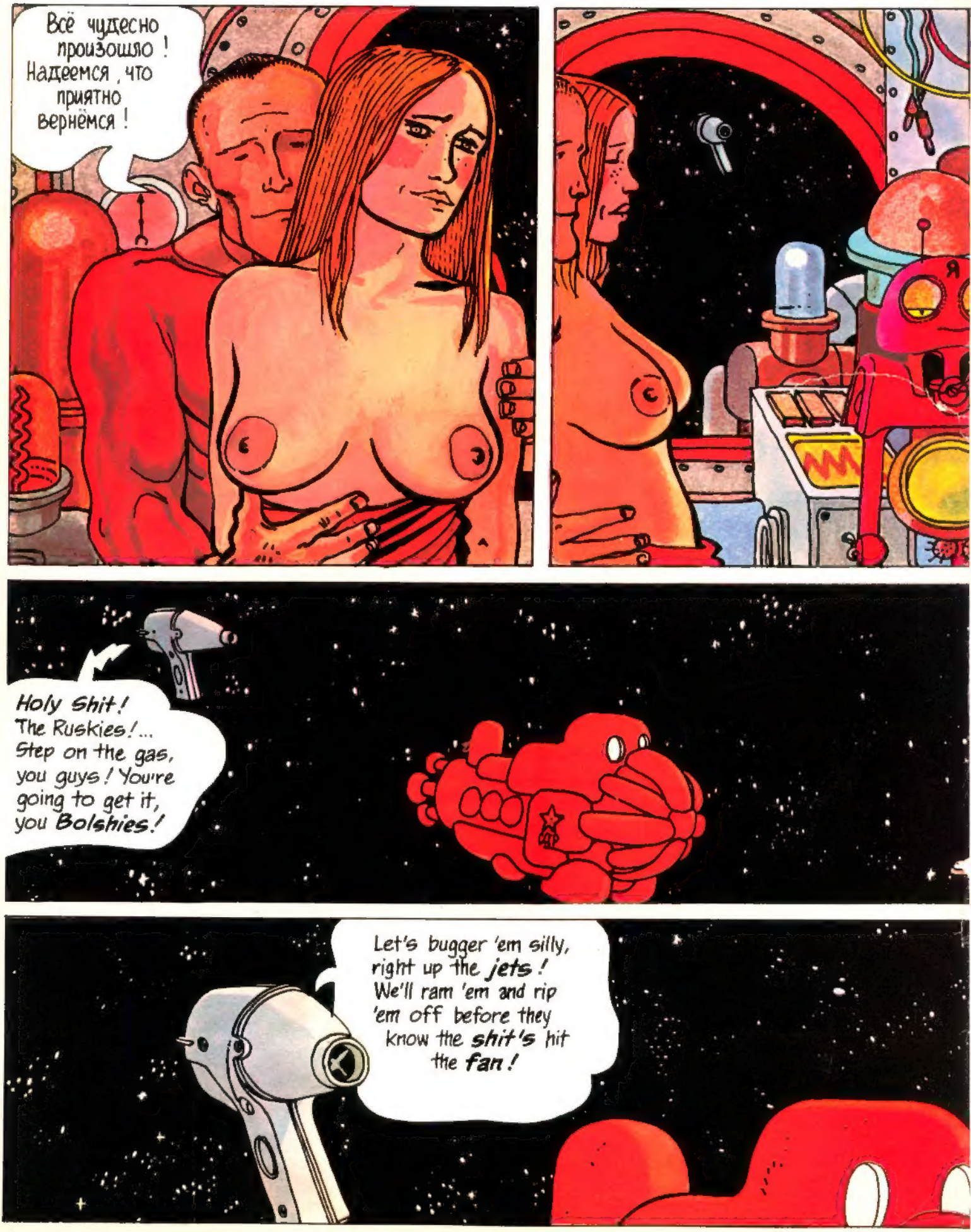
We hear you.

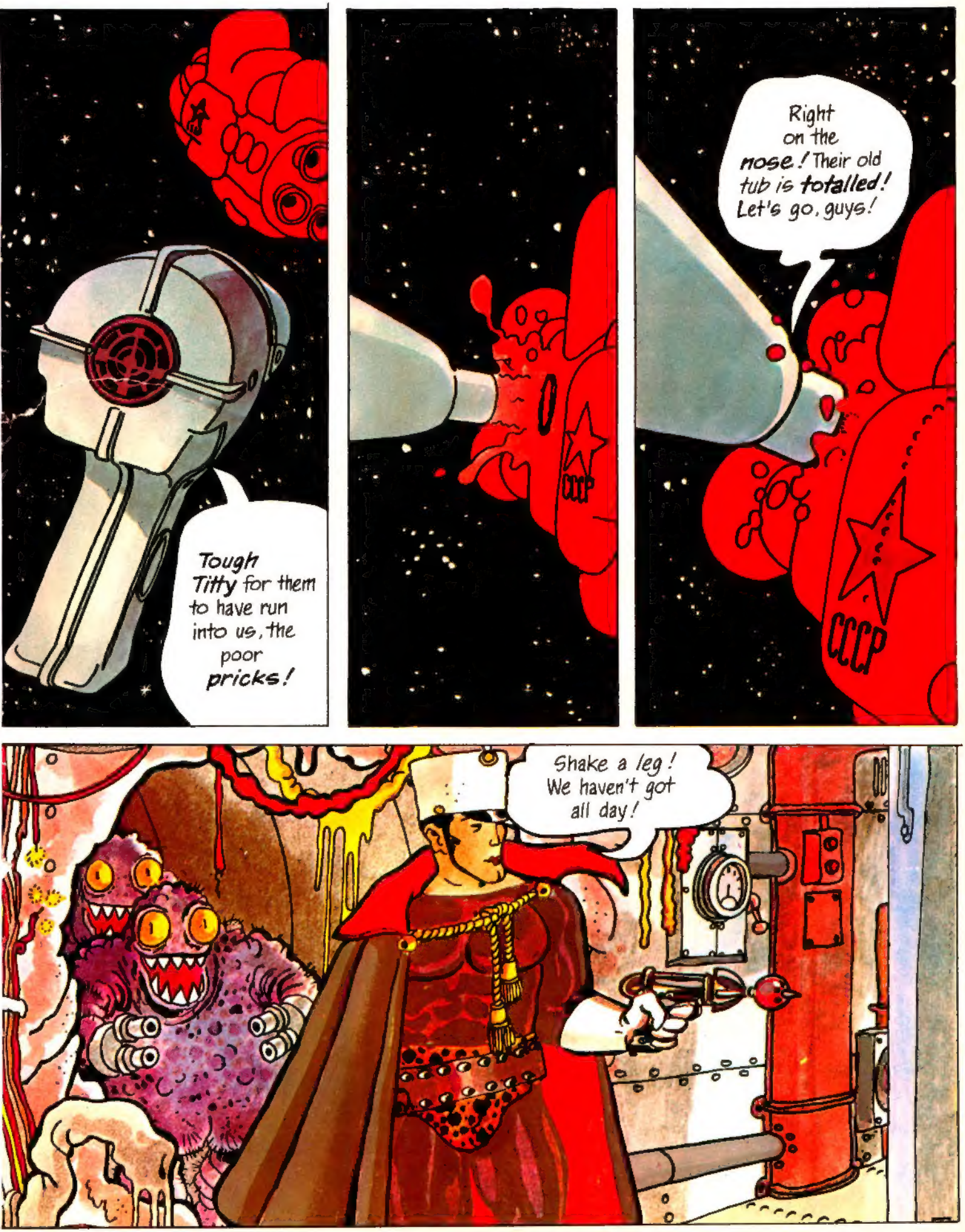
МЕДОВЫЙ МЕСЯЦ

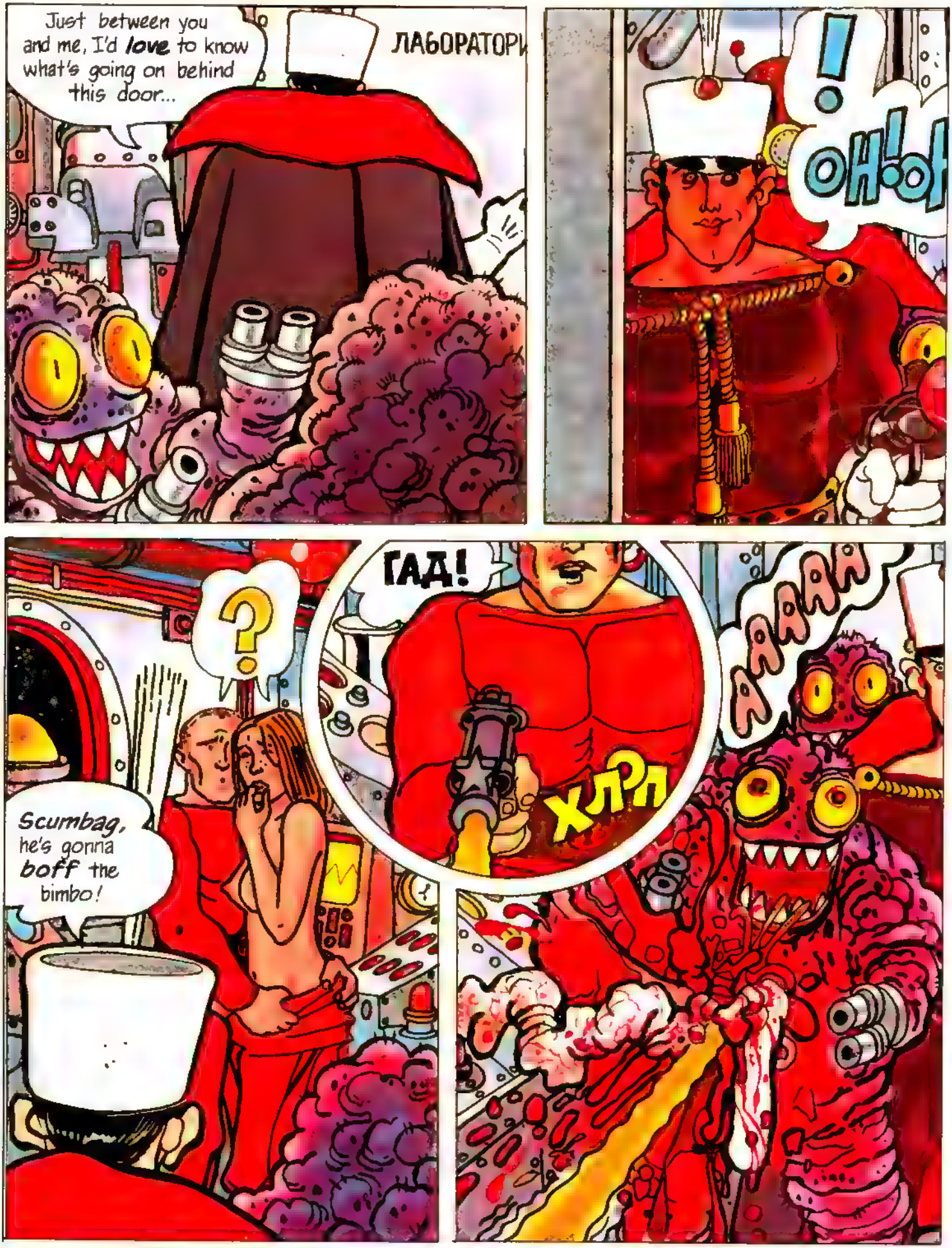


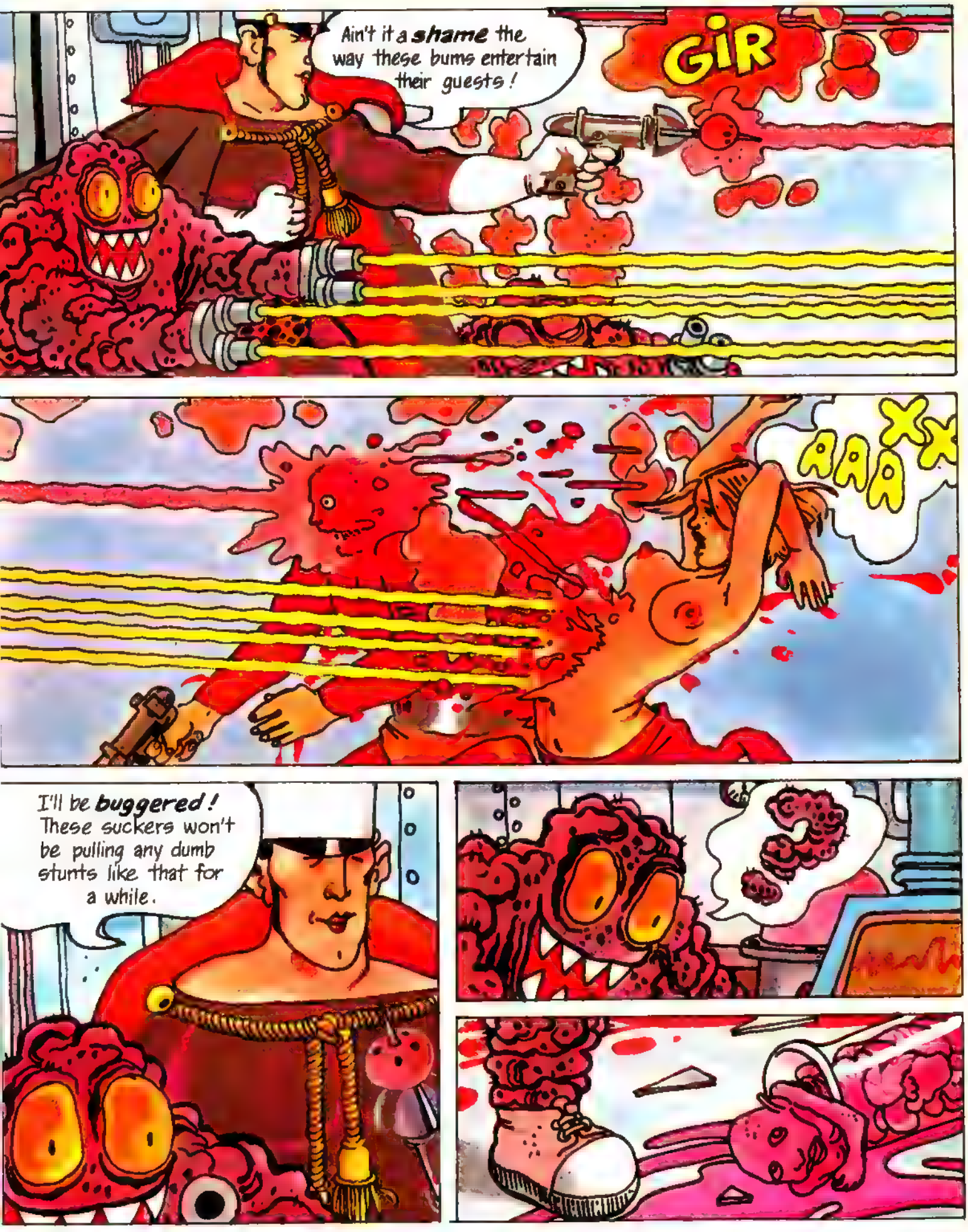


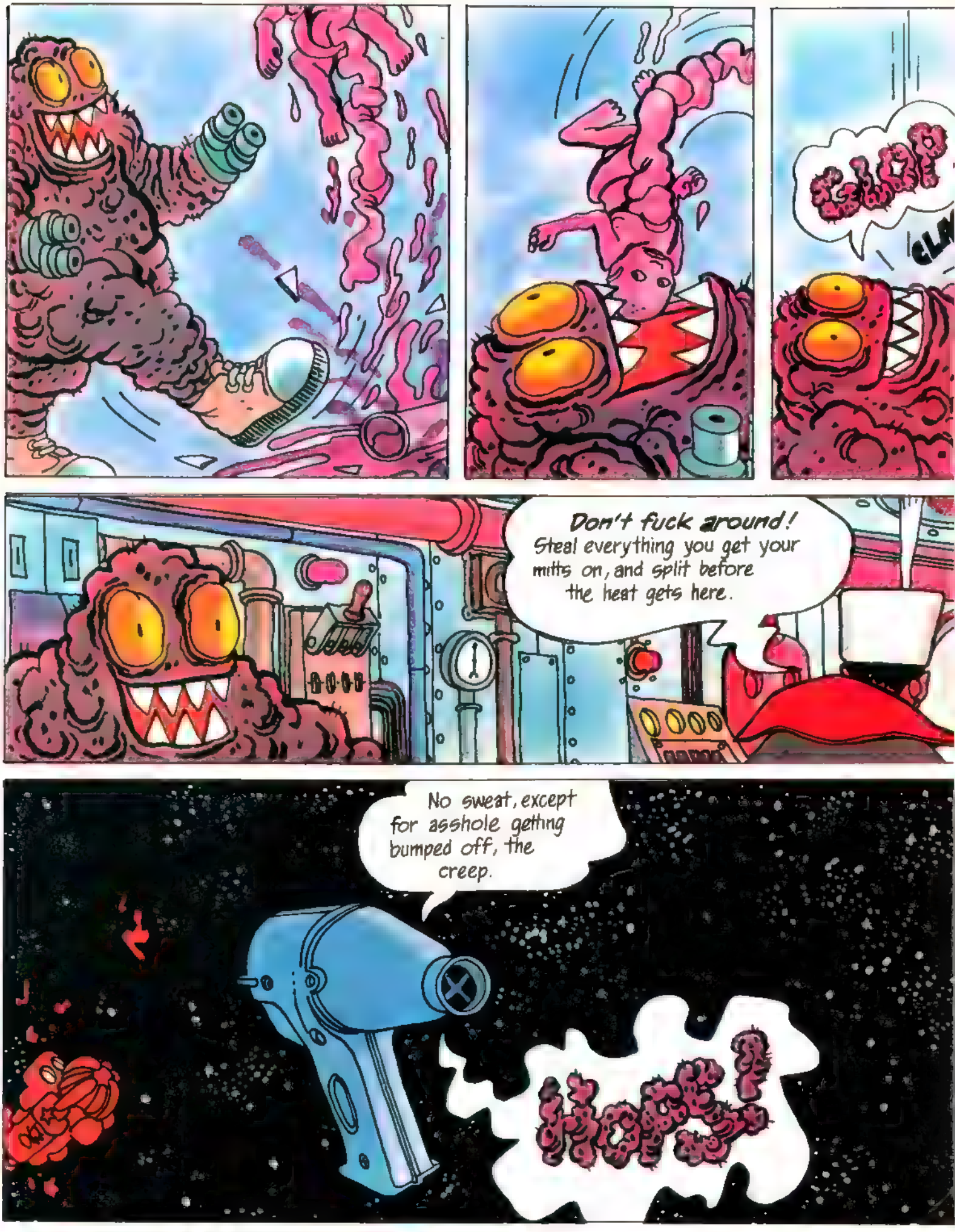
ЛАБОРАТОРИЯ
СТУК СТУК
Светлана, как чувствует себя наш сын, первый ребёнок шпации... Ну, расскажи...
Всё хорошо! Он совсем нормально развивается. Через несколько часов, он имеет взрослый рост.
Отлично! Мы сможем вернуться домой. Тебе нравилось бы покидать твои контроли несколько минут?
Согласно, Никита... А, пожалуйста, не слишком долго.
Наше свадебное путешествие оканчивается, ребёнок растёт, миссия наша - успех... Светлана, я тебя люблю!

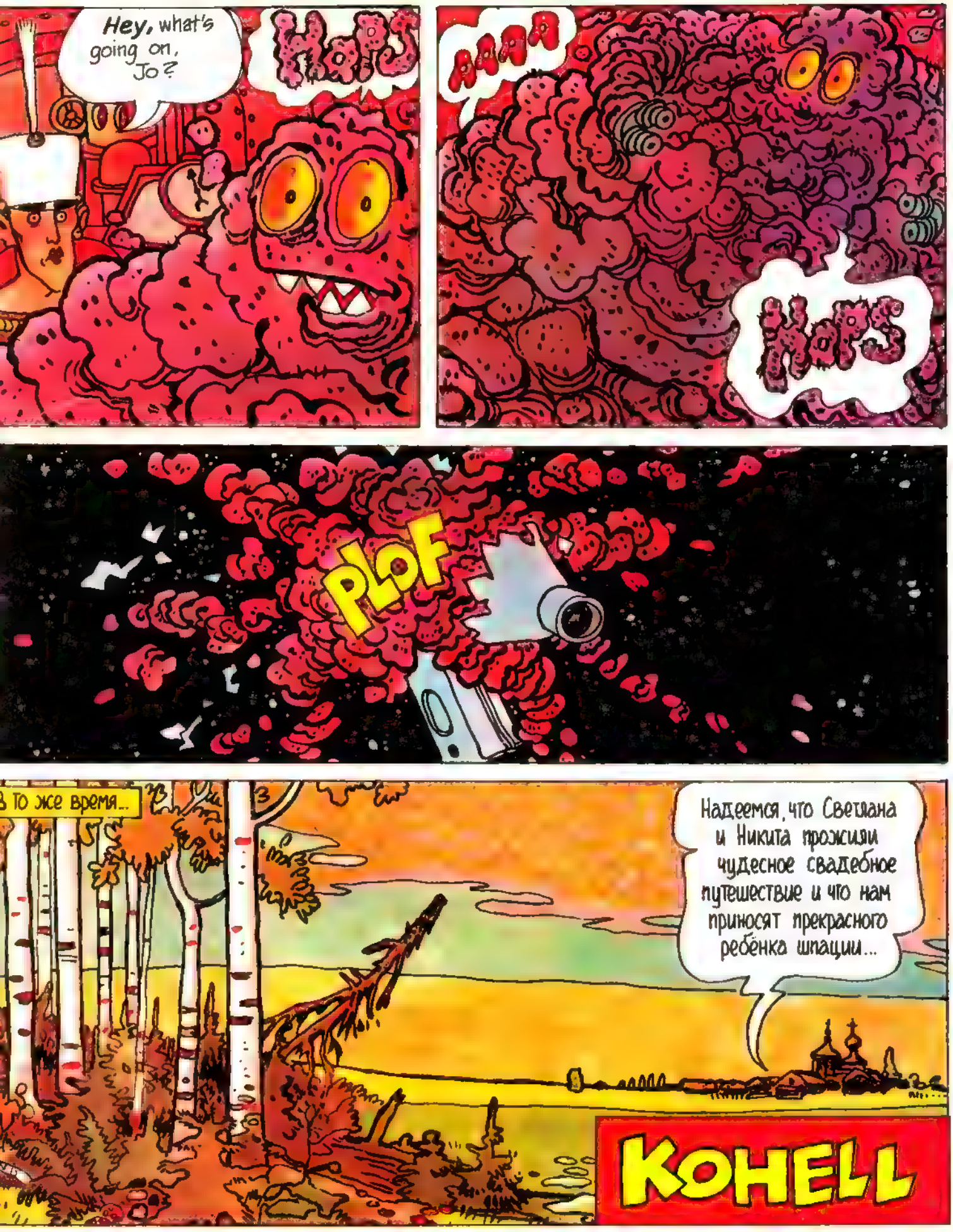

Всё чудесно произошло! Надеемся, что приятно вернёмся!
Holy Shit! The Ruskies!... Step on the gas, you guys! You're going to get it, you Bolshies!
Let's bugger 'em silly, right up the jets! We'll ram 'em and rip 'em off before they know the shit's hit the fan!


Tough Titty for them to have run into us, the poor pricks!
Right on the nose! Their old tub is totalled! Let's go, guys!
CCCP
Shake a leg! We haven't got all day!

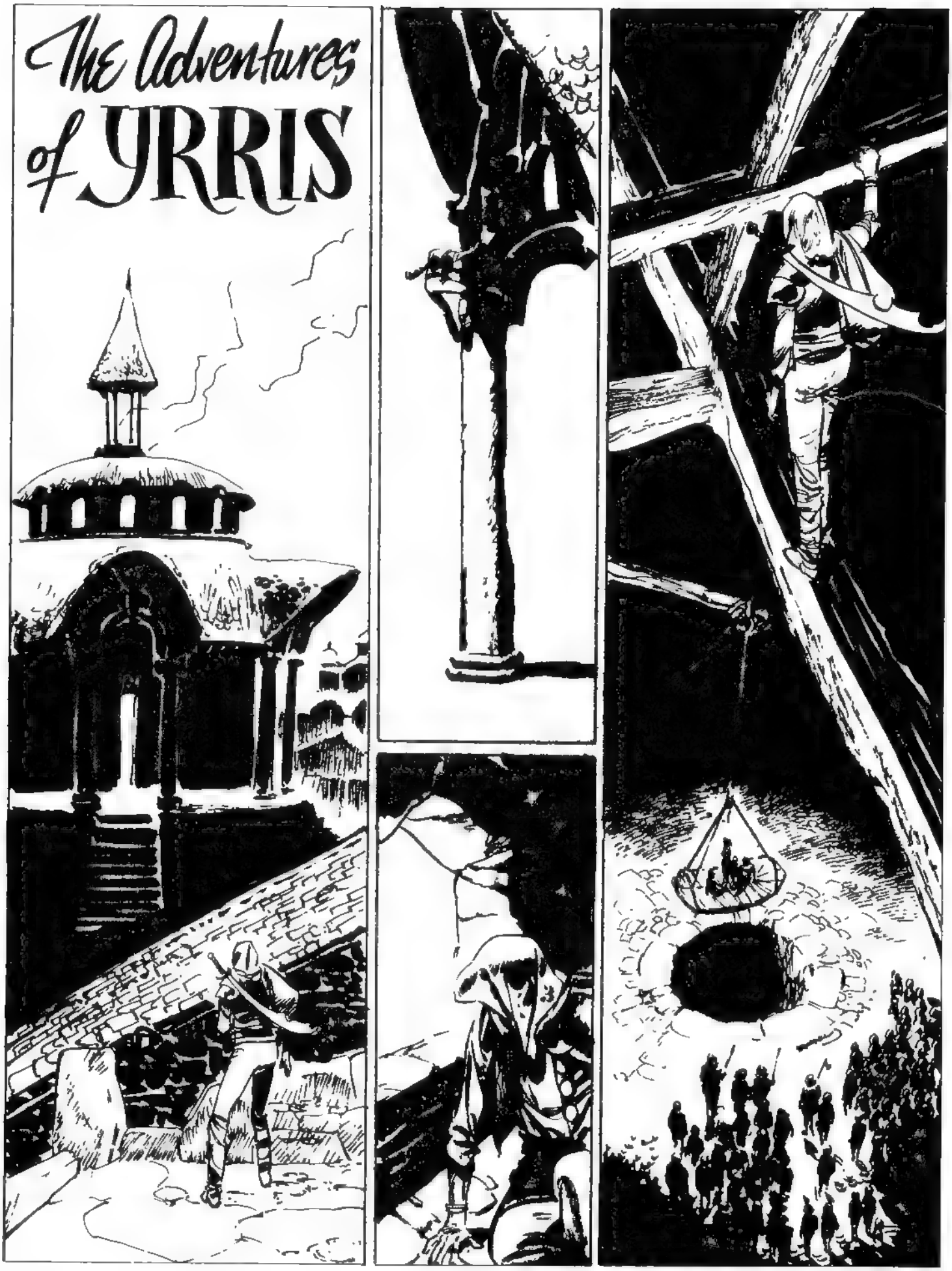

Just between you and me, I'd love to know what's going on behind this door...
ЛАБОРАТОРИ
!
OH!OH
?
ГАД!
ХЛРП
AAAAAA
Scumbag, he's gonna boff the bimbo!


Ain't it a **shame** the way these bums entertain their guests!
GIR
AAAXX
I'll be **buggered!** These suckers won't be pulling any dumb stunts like that for a while.


Don't fuck around! Steal everything you get your mitts on, and split before the heat gets here.
No sweat, except for asshole getting bumped off, the creep.


Hey, what's going on, Jo?
KaPS
AAAA
KaPS
PLOF
В то же время...
Надеемся, что Светлана и Никита прожили чудесное свадебное путешествие и что нам приносят прекрасного ребёнка шпации...
KOHELL

The Adventures of YRRIS



SILENCE, MY LITTLE BEAUTIES, IT'S YRRIS, YOUR SAVIOR. I HAVE COME TO GAZE WITH YOU UPON THE DRAGON WHO IS AFRAID OF DAY
YOU POOR IDIOT! WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR US?
THE IMPOSSIBLE, MY DARLINGS! BUT RIGHT NOW I'M AS SCARED AS YOU ARE!
SILENCE, I THINK HIS LORDSHIP IS HERE
BY SAROT, HE IS EVEN BIGGER THAN I'D IMAGINED.
I THOUGHT YOU WERE RUNNING AWAY, YOU MISERABLE ABORTION, AND NOW HERE YOU ARE AGAIN
NOW LOOK, I JUST COULDN'T RESIST THE URGE TO MEET YOU, OH DIVINE CREATURE, BECAUSE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD I HAVE HEARD TELL OF THE BEAUTY OF YOUR FACE AND THE GRACE OF YOUR MANNERS...

DEATH GIVES YOU COURAGE, YOU PATHETIC SPECK OF DUST.
LOOK, MY LITTLE ONES! LOOK UPON THE KING OF THE DELICATE EYES, THE KING WHO IS AFRAID OF THE LIGHT! I HAVE HERE IN MY BAG SEVERAL THINGS FOR HIS PLEASURE.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, YOU LITTLE RAT?
I HAVE SOME LITTLE BUGS FOR YOUR DELIGHT, OH GOD AND GODDESS ALL AT ONCE.
WHAT'VE YOU GOT THERE?
SOME LITTLE YELLOW FLOWERS, YOUR LORDSHIP..

I ALWAYS HAVE SOME PRECIOUS LITTLE THINGS LIKE THAT IN MY BAG. THESE FLOWERS WERE SOLD TO ME BY A BLACK SKINNED MERCHANT ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD.
OH, YRRIS, YOU HAVE WON MY HEART!
TAKE THAT, YOUR DIVINE SHITSHIP! A GIFT FROM THE RAT. YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO DO ANYTHING AGAINST THEM, YOUR EXCREMENCY. THESE FLOWERS REPRODUCE AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT, AND THEY ARE SO BRIGHT...
AT LAST, A LITTLE RECOGNITION! BUT IT'S NOT YOUR HEART I'M INTERESTED IN!
WE HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE. THESE LITTLE FLOWERS WILL SOON EAT EVERYTHING THEY SEE AROUND THEMSELVES!

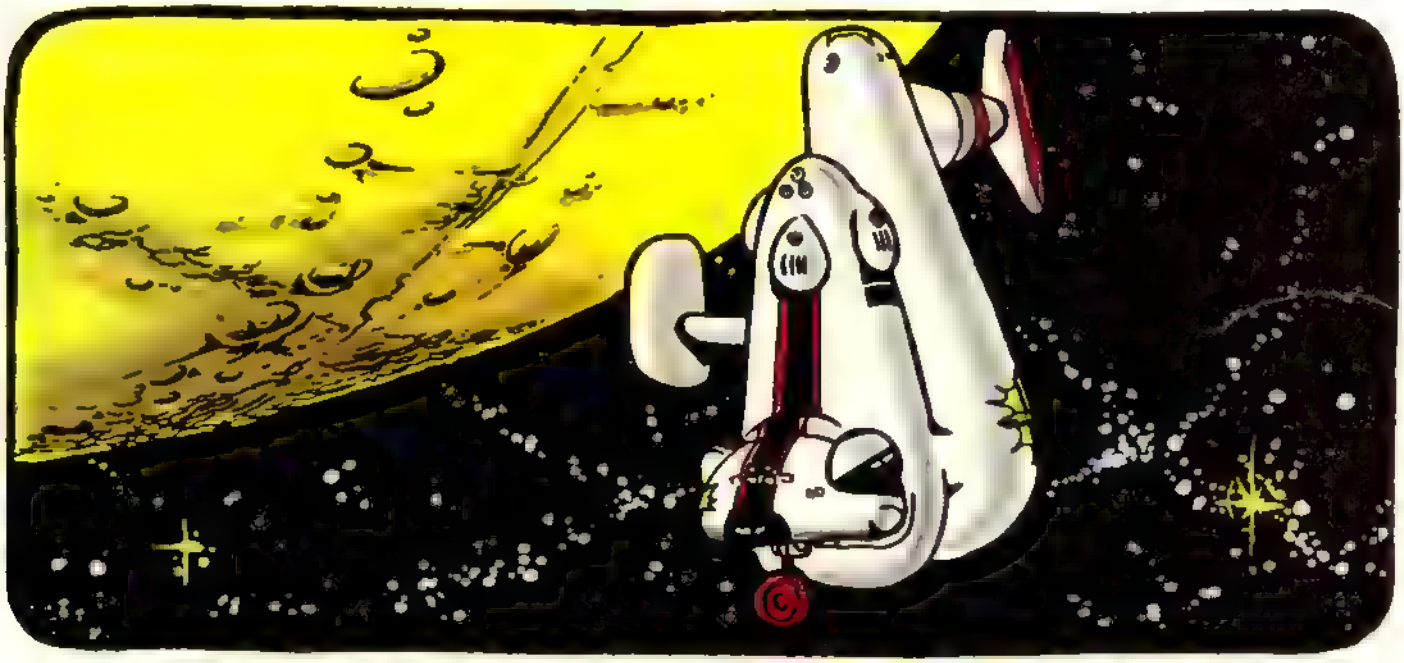
WAIT UNTIL THE OTHERS LIFT THE FERRY CAR BACK UPSTAIRS THEY HAVE THE RIGHT TO OUR REMAINS.
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE IN A HURRY!

ALL RIGHT, TAKE IT EASY, MY LITTLE PIXIES, OR YOU'LL BE THE DEATH OF YOUR HERO!
FEIN

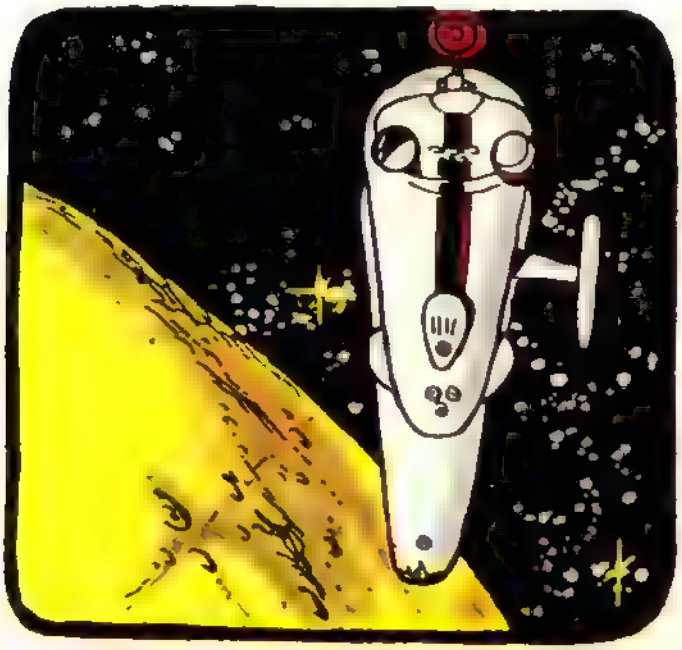
SUNPOT

CHAPTER 2

THE GIANT SUNPOT COMPLEX HANGS HIGH ABOVE THE RUSSIAN SIDE OF THE MOON... IT HANGS LIKE A BLOATED SIAMESE BOWLING PIN IN THE AFTERNOON MOTIONLESSNESS OF SPACE...

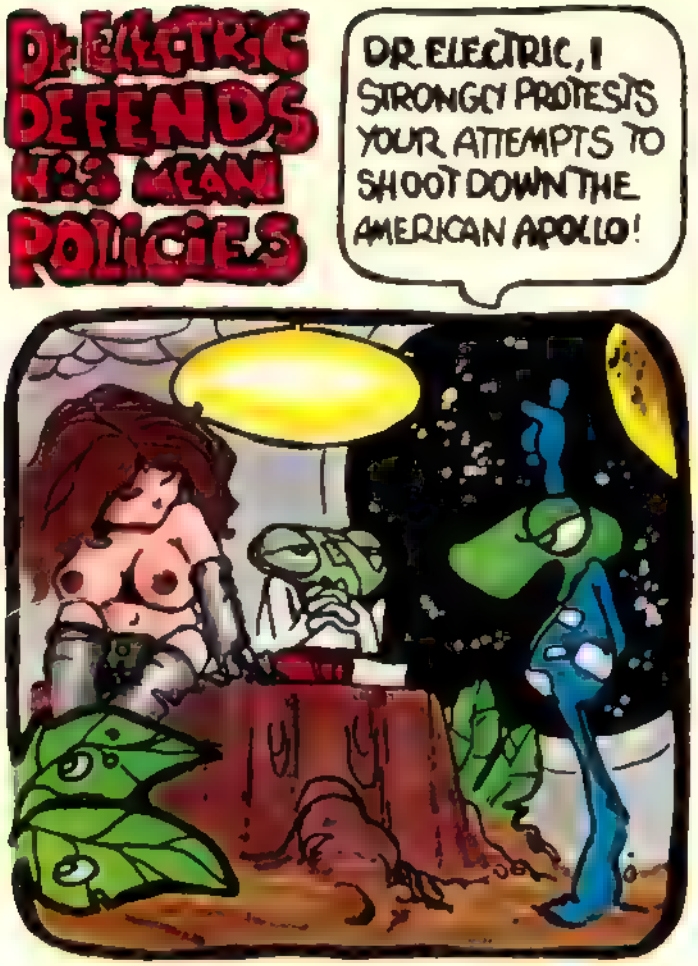


BECAUSE OF THE CERTAIN DANGER OF DISCOVERY BY THE APOLLO MOON SHIP, DR. ELECTRIC ELECTS TO MOVE THE GREAT MASSIVE SUNPOT OVER TO THE PLANET VENUS.. 3 DAYS AT DEAD SLOW INERTIAL...



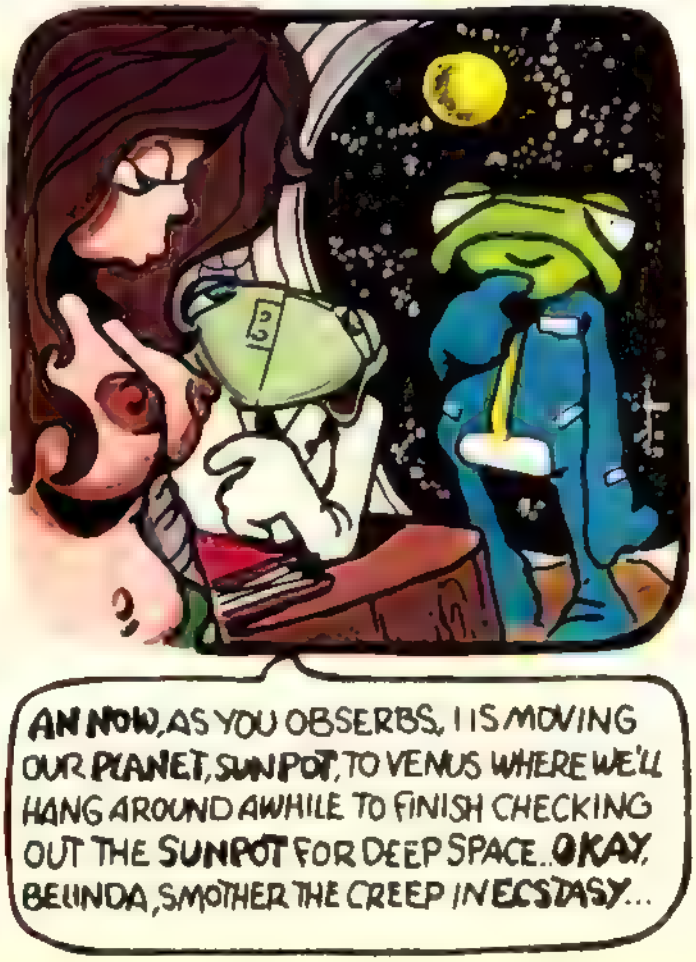
THE POWER FACTORY IS WARMED UP, FUEL SCREWS ARE FED, SCREAMING, INTO THE MONO-DIRECTIONALIZED ATOMIC INERTIAL FORCE TRANSFORMERS.. SUNPOT MOVES OFF LIKE A MOULDY CREAKING PLANET...

DR. ELECTRIC DEFENDS HIS ANTI POLICIES



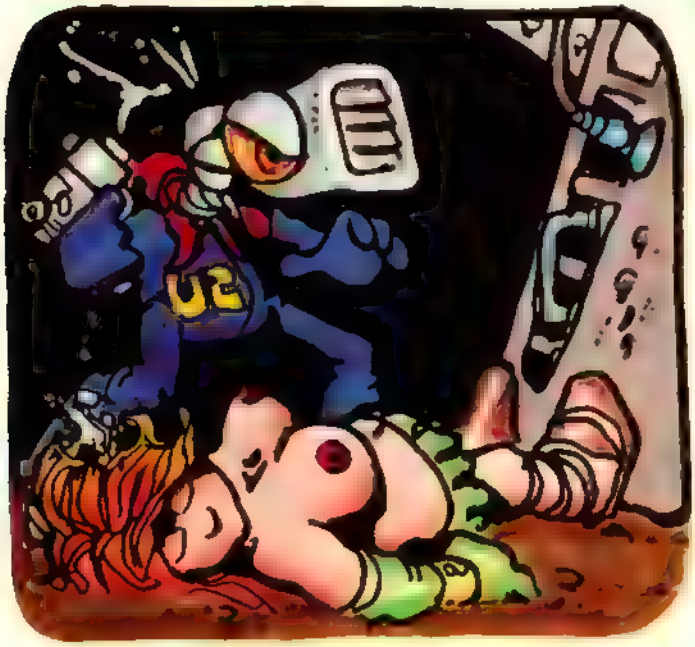
SHUTUP, OR I'LL HAS BELINDA BUMP SMOTHER YOU WIF HER HOT SYNTHETIC BOOBS!
YOU HAD YOUR ORIGINS IN AMERICA! HOW COULD YOU ATTEMPT SUCH AN ANTI-THING?!

ANTI-THINGS COME EASY TO ME.. BUT WE HAS SPARED DA APOLLO MOON SHIP... REMEMBERS, BOWEL MOUTH, THE ONLY REASON THEY DIDN'T SEE THE SUNPOT WAS BECAUSE THEY WAS LOOKIN' THE OTHER WAY...


AN NOW, AS YOU OBSERBS, I IS MOVING OUR PLANET, SUNPOT, TO VENUS WHERE WE'LL HANG AROUND AWHILE TO FINISH CHECKING OUT THE SUNPOT FOR DEEP SPACE.. OKAY, BELINDA, SMOTHER THE CREEP IN ECSTASY...

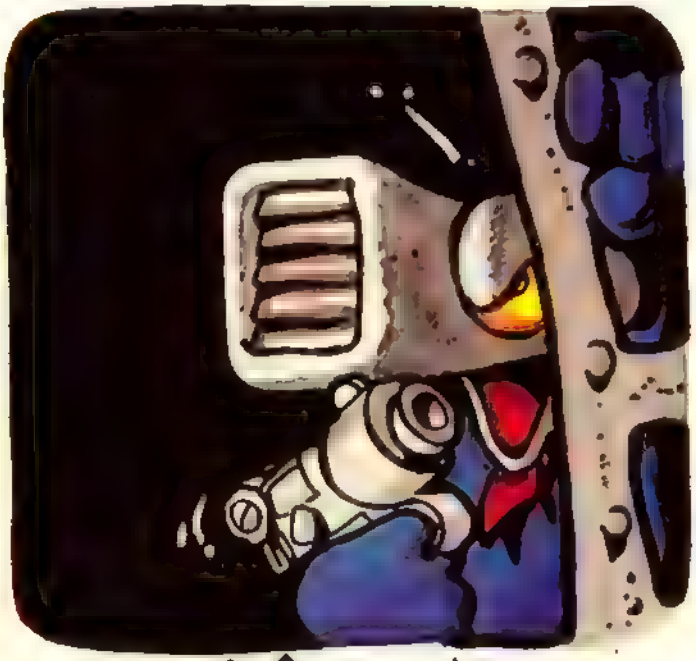
THE NUTTY SCREW

YAHA! I IS ABOUT TO TAKE OVER DIS TRAVESTY OF ABORTED SCIENCE FICTION!



I'LL JUS' KILLS MYSELF ANOTHER FALSIE JUST TO PERK UP ME MARKSMAN SHIP..

KUNK KUNK!



WHAT?! YARGH, ELECTRIC BEES!!

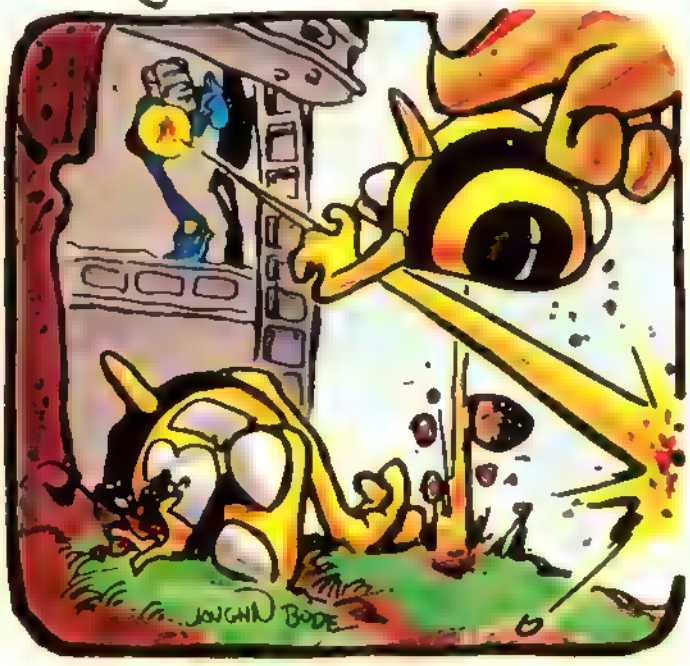
ALRIGHT, SCREW-U-2 YOU IS A BERSERKER, AN UNSTABLE ELEMENT IN THE SUNPOT PLANET'S STRUCTURE, GIVE UP!!

COME AN GET ME, YA' DIRTY BEESWAX STUFFIN' MOTHERS!!

BOOM FARK, KUNK, WAP WAP ZA-DI-DI-DI-DIT!

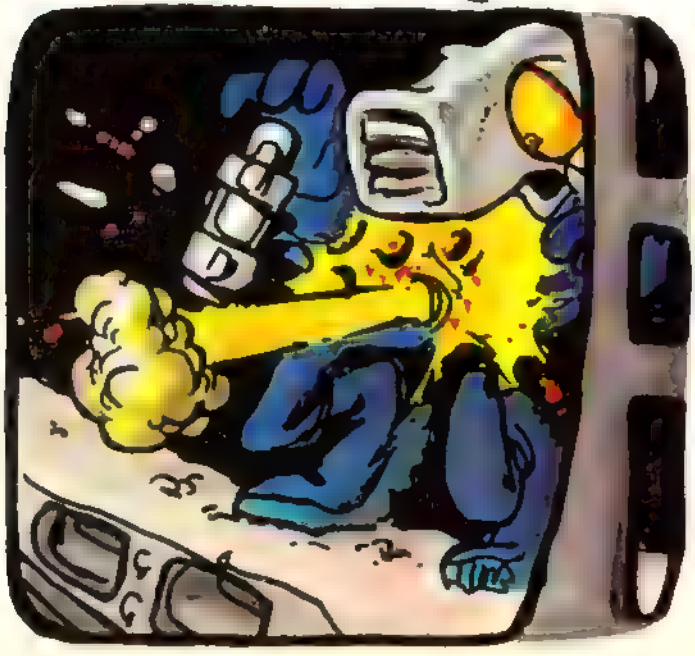
IT'S GUN-GADIN AT DA ALAMO BOYS! MY HOUR OF EGO IDENTITY, MY ROLLING MOMENT OF TRUTH!

POPPANG BOOM ZINGO BA-TWEE



PUNCH CRUSH SUNCH

ARGH THEY HAS DECIMATED ME LITTLE BOD!!

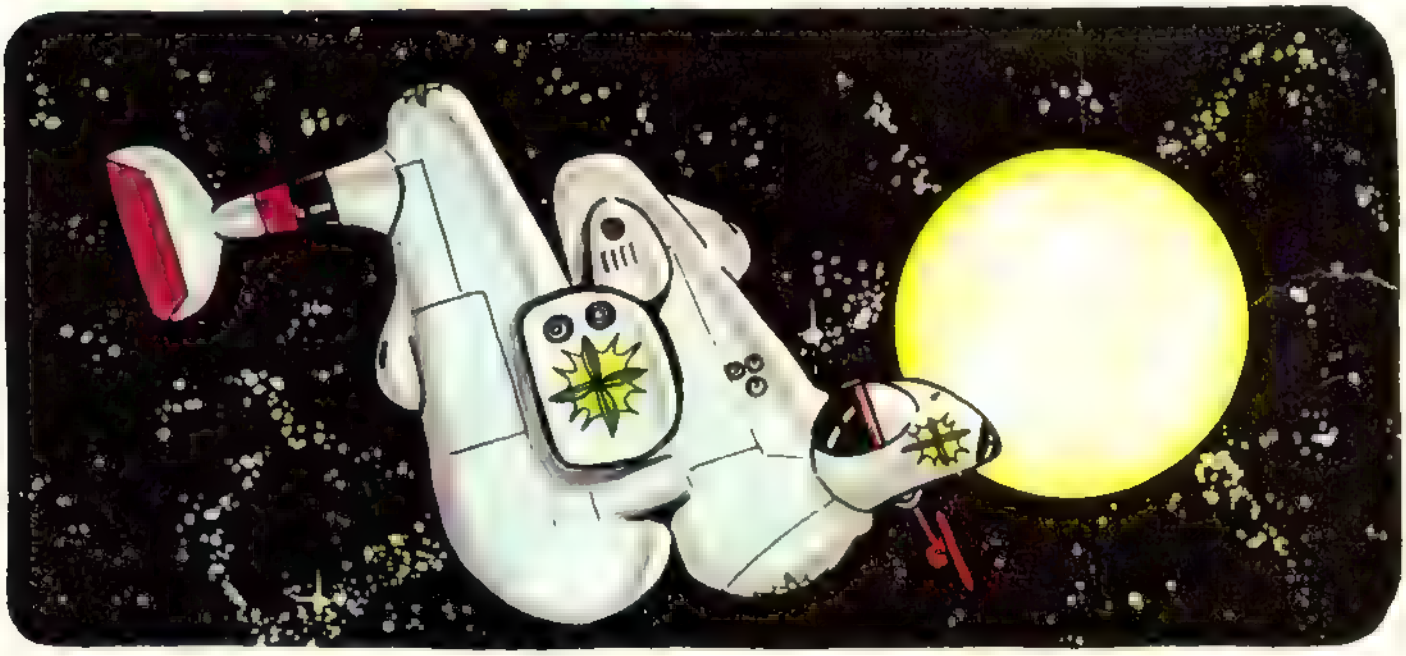


REPORT TO DR ELECTRIC.. WE HAVE DESTROYED THE BERSERKER SCREW AT THE PEAK OF ITS IDENTITY CRISIS...

HEY, CAN I TELL BELINDA BUMP THE SCREW SHOT HER FALSIES?...

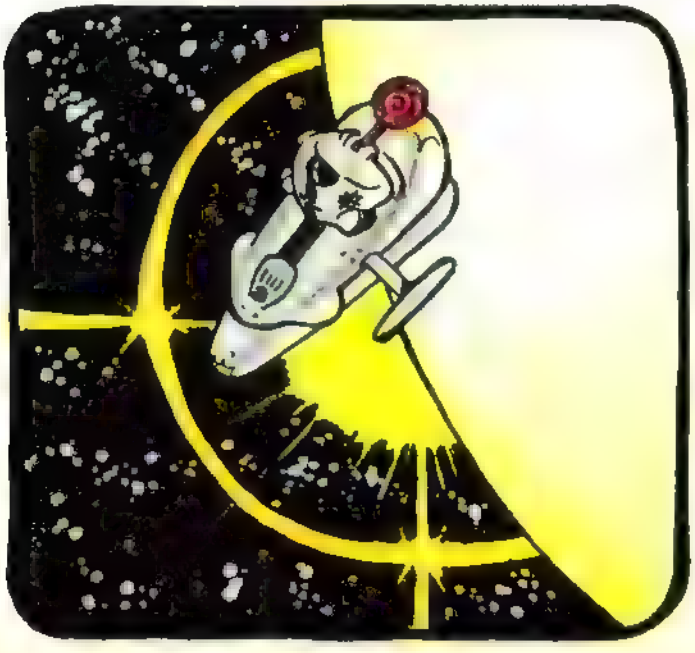
CHAPTER 3

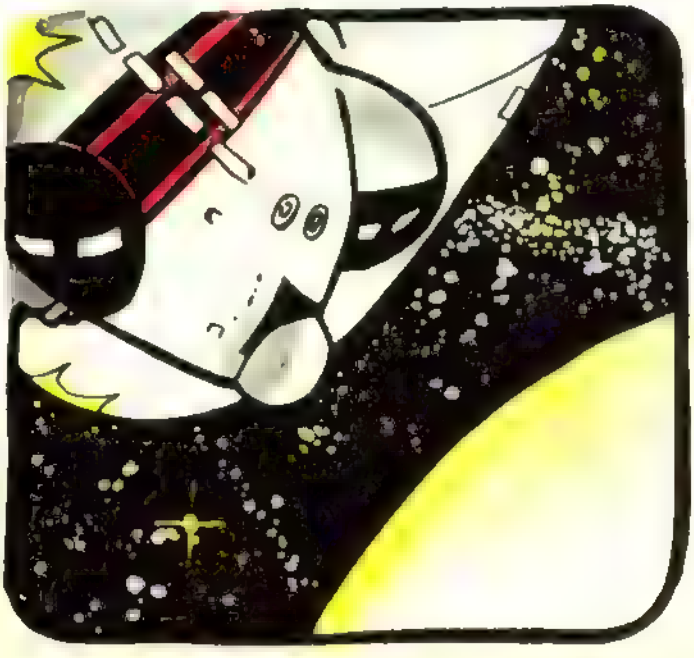
SUNPOT, THE PLANET, MOVES ACROSS THE QUIET OPULENCE OF FAT SOLAR SPACE LIKE THE GREAT RED PHALLIC TEMPLE OF BROTHER MERCURY... WHITE **VENUS** LAYS OFF IN THE DISTANCE.



THE **SUNPOT** ENTERS INTO A SLOW TUMBLING **VENUSIAN POLAR ORBIT** IT ALLOWS ITSELF TO FALL ABOVE **VENUS** IN THE **MATING DANCE** OF UNIVERSAL ATTRACTION....

THE HUGE **POWER FACTORY** IS SHUT DOWN AND THE CREWS OF **SCREWS**, **LIZARDS**, **FALSIES** AND PARAPHERNALIA STAND DOWN FROM **SUNPOT'S** MAIDEN **VOYAGE** ACROSS PLANETARY SPACE...





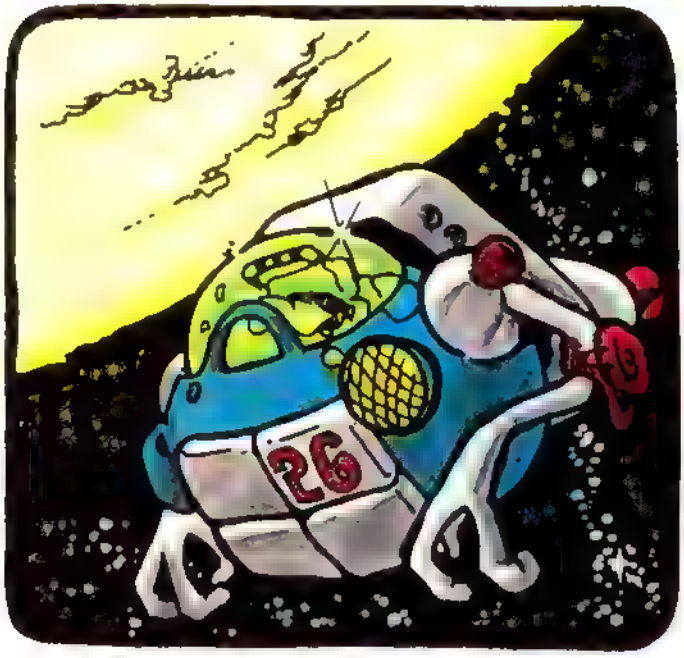
DR. ELECTRIC DISCUSSES STUFF

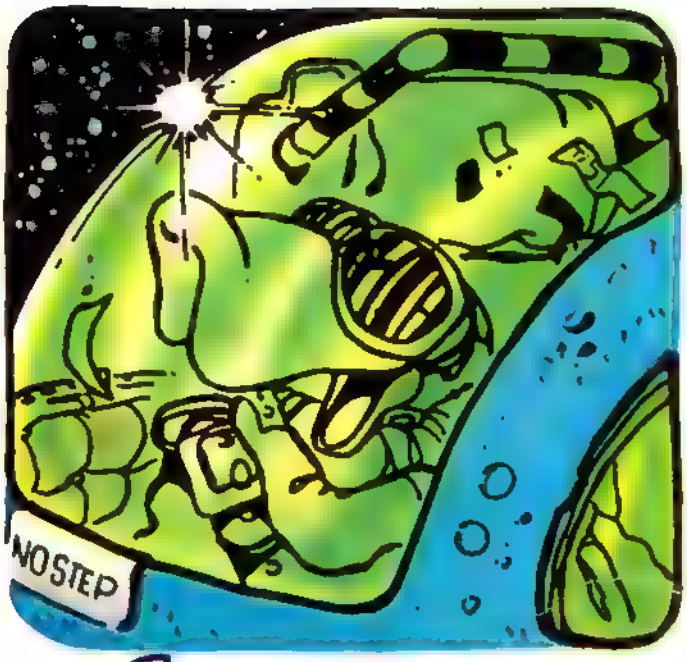
WOW! LOOKIT DAT, YOU PINK TIT! VENUS! WE IS IN ORBIT ABOVE VENUS... PUT SUNGLASSES ON.
WOO, THAT'S BRIGHT.. WILL WE SEND A PARTY DOWN INTO THE CLOUDS FOR SURFACE DATA?..

AHH...WE IS HERE TO CHECK OUT OUR PLANET SHIP FOR DEEP SPACE AND 'HIGH C' WORTHINESS. WE GONNA' DO A CURSORY STUDY OF VENUS WIF' INFRARED AN BODY BEAN/MAPPERS...

THE MOONS OF VENUS

BOOBY BEAN NO. 26, PLEASE CEASE YER MAP SCANNING AND RETURN TO SUNPOT. ALL OTHER BEANS ARE IN.



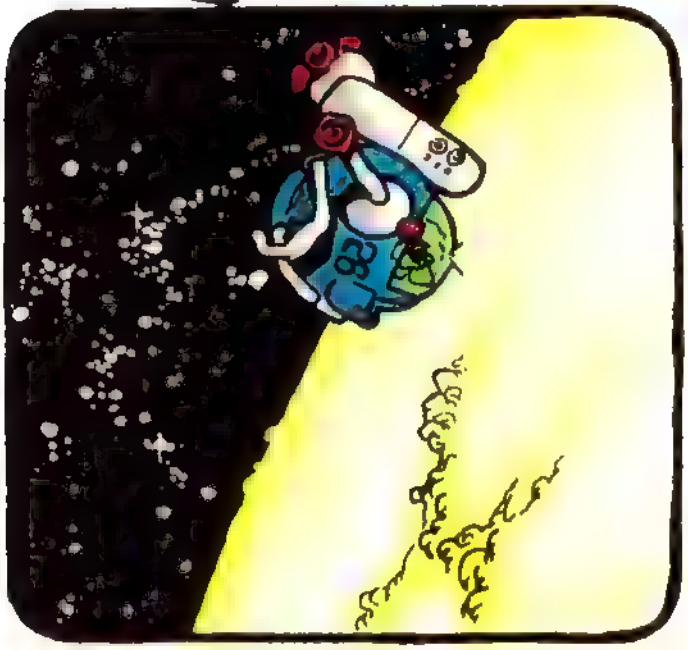


MAN, VENUS! BRIGHT AS A GLARING WINTER SNOWFIELD IN DA' AFTERNOON..

NO. 26, WE ARE LOSING TRANSMISSION LOCK ON YOU! YOU IS WAY DA HELL BELOW OUR HORIZON...

OKAY, SUNPOT, I IS COMING. I JUS' WANT TO TAKE ONE LAST LOOK SEE. I'LL LIFT UP ME SUNGLASSES..

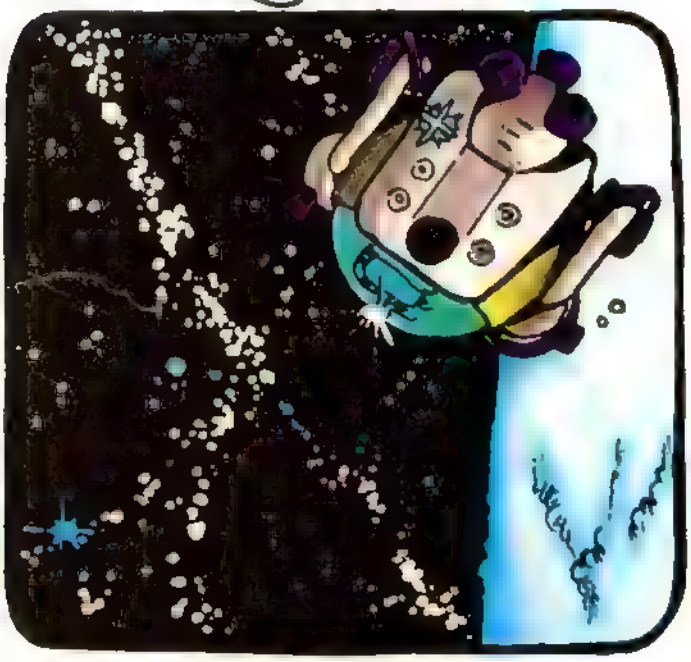
BEAN 26., DON'T LOOK AT VENUS WIT OUT YOUR DARK GOGGLES, YOUSE CAN GET SNOW BLIND.



YARGH! I CAN'T SEE. I IS SNOW BLIND!

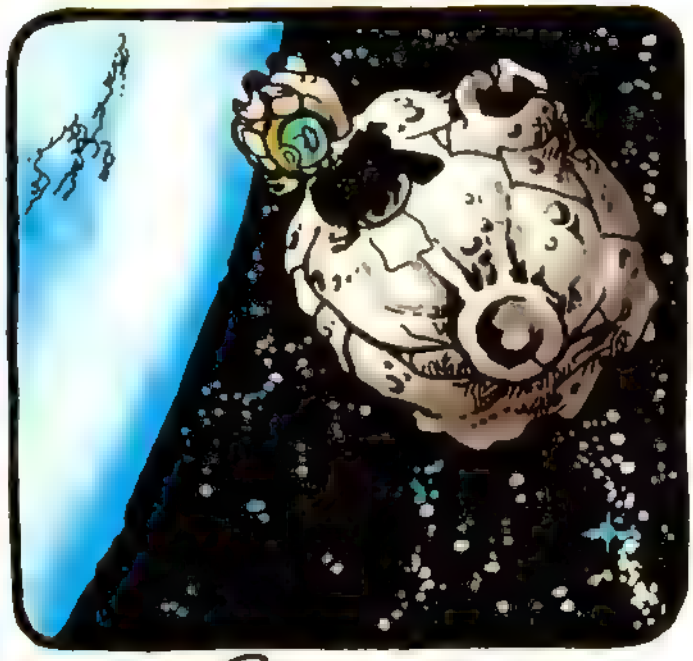
WOT IS I GONNA DO!! I IS BLIND AN I JUST LOST ALL ENERGY AN COMMUNICATION TRANSMISSION FROM THE SUNPOT PLANET! OH ME!... I IS DIRELY DOOMED FOR SURE! SNIF

NOW HOLD IT.. I GOTTO BE MAIN COOL, DAT'S MY ONLY CHANCE. OLD LT. RUBBER BERRY DON'T GIVE UP ALL DIS EASY.. I HAS ENOUGH FUEL ENERGY LEFT TO DOCK ME WIF THE SUNPOT. I'LL JUST SCAN AN LISTEN FOR A ECHO TRACK..



BEEP-BABEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP

HURRAH, I GOTS A BOUNCING RADIO ECHO! IT A STRONG ONE. STRONG ENOUGH DAT I'LL BE DOCKED WIF SUNPOT IN A HALF HOUR



HELLO, SUNPOT, DIS IS BEAN 26. HELLO'. HUM... I HAS BEEN DOCKED FOR TWO HOURS NOW AN NOBODY HAS COME OUT TO GET ME... CLICK, CLICK... MAYBE MY RADIO ON DA' BLINK.

TO BE CONTINUED...

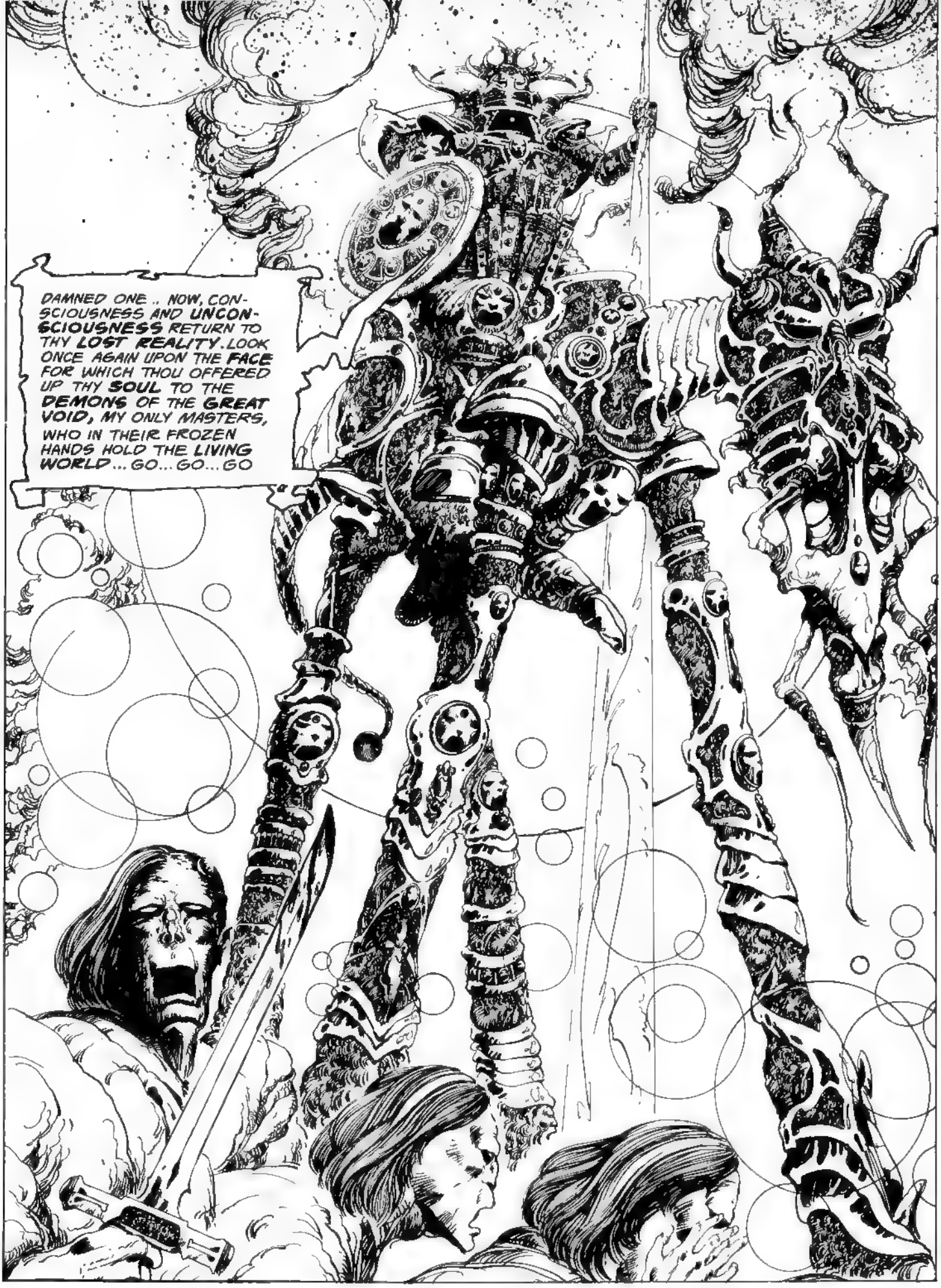
AARRF

AGAIN

Why have I been torn from my **sleep**, oh cruel gods?
Have I not yet **atoned** for my **guilt**?

I beg of you the **Gift** of **Eternal Death**!

IT IS I, THY GUARDIAN, I, WHOSE LANCE IS THE PILLAR OF THE WORLD, THE LIMITS OF WHICH NO MAN HAS SEEN! AT THE COMMAND OF MY MASTERS, THE GUARDIANS OF THE DOORS OF ULTIMATE EMPTINESS, I AWAKEN THEE AGAIN!
TAKE UP AGAIN FOR A FEW BRIEF MOMENTS, THE MASQUE OF THY LIFE!


DAMNED ONE .. NOW, CONSCIOUSNESS AND UNCONSCIOUSNESS RETURN TO THY LOST REALITY. LOOK ONCE AGAIN UPON THE FACE FOR WHICH THOU OFFERED UP THY SOUL TO THE DEMONS OF THE GREAT VOID, MY ONLY MASTERS, WHO IN THEIR FROZEN HANDS HOLD THE LIVING WORLD... GO... GO... GO

AAH
MY LORD SLEEPS AND MOANS IN HIS SLEEP.
IT'S NOTHING... A BAD DREAM .. I HAD BEEN DEAD FOR CENTURIES, AND MY BODY WAS EXPOSED TO THE WINDS...
... MOUNTED ON A FINGER OF STONE AMONG THE TORRENTS OF SPACE...
MY SON AGORN HAS DREAMS AS TROUBLED AS A YOUNG GIRL'S!!
HE'S IN LOVE AGAIN! MY BROTHER HAS A WEAKNESS FOR HIS SERVING GIRL. TRUST ONE IDIOT TO LOVE ANOTHER
SON OF A SERPENT! FALSE BASTARD!
IT WOULD TAKE STRONGER ARMS THAN YOURS TO UPROOT ME, AGORN!!!
ONE DAY YOUR TONGUE WILL HANG FROM MY BELT!!
I KNOW THAT YOU DESIRE SWEET WATER, BUT YOU WILL NOT HAVE HER, TWISTED FLESH!
A LOT OF TROUBLE OVER A WHORE!

YOU, COME HERE!
LOOK, AGORN, HOW EASY SHE IS FOR ALL OF US!
AN EXPENSE OF SPIRIT IN A WASTE OF SHAME!
HI! HI! HI!
HERE, EPHRAIM! I GIVE HER TO YOU FOR YOUR PLEASURE!
AHAHA HAHA
AND EVERYONE ROSE FROM THE TABLE AND LEFT THE ROOM, SHAKING WITH LAUGHTER. AGORN ALONE REMAINED.
AT THIS TIME, AGORN WAS YOUNG AND HE PASSIONATELY LOVED SWEET WATER. BUT NOW HE FELT RISING WITHIN HIM A PASSIONATE HATRED.

He resolved that death should fall upon that house.

He prepared himself.

He shaved his head.

His face changed...it suddenly became grim.

At length he betook himself to the chamber of Ephraim the Magician...

HOW DID YOU ENTER DESPITE MY SPELLS?

GIVE SWEET WATER TO ME!

I..I HAVE CAST HER TO THE DEMONS OF THE DARK! YOU WILL NEVER SEE HER AGAIN. EVEN I CANNOT BRING HER BACK!

JOIN HER, THEN!

DEMONS! OH, DEMONS...

OH, DEMONS, I OFFER YOU THE BLOOD OF MY FAMILY! OF THOSE WHO HATE ME! OF THOSE WHO HAVE KILLED MY LOVE! PHANTOMS, I OFFER YOU MY SOUL...

Agorn Comes
to Kill!

Agorn Comes
to Kill!

Go, Agorn, Go, My Son...
AGORN, MY LORD, WHAT DO YOU WANT?
SO, PULLING IT AGAIN, TWISTED FLESH?
NO!!!
AAAAA

And calmly, **Agorn** cuts off one arm, then the **other**, one leg, then the **other**; until what is **left** of **Twisted Flesh** sprawls there **screaming**...

HAPPY BROTHER, I'M SURE THAT YOUR **SUCCESS** WITH **WOMEN** WILL NEVER BE GREATER THAN **NOW!**
And the heart of the castle resounded with the **cries** and **shrieks** of **agony**, until in the **fury** of his **revenge**, **Agorn** could do no more against him
ALL THIS **NOISE**... IS THAT **YOU**, AGORN?
YES, FATHER, IT IS YOUR **SON**.
NO NEED, MY DEAR FATHER, THAT HAS ALREADY BEEN **DONE**...
I CURSE YOU, **DEVIL SPAWN**... I **CURSE** YOU FOREVER... AARRHK...

Horrible were the howls mingling with the tumult of the storm, when at last, running with blood...

...Agorn loomed on the highest tower, bellowing...

SWEET WATER, MY LOVE, I WEEP FOR YOU AND I WANT YOU. HOWL ON, OH STORM, HOWL, BUT GIVE ME MY LOVE. OH DEMONS, TAKE MY SOUL AND GIVE BACK LIFE TO HER WHOM I DESIRE!

Agorn, you are **damned**. Agorn, you will **relive** for **thousands** and **thousands** of years the deeds of your life... **this** will be for **all** eternity -- Agorn the KILLER -- Agorn, Son of DEATH --

You will **never** find her again, whom you **loved**, but you will **never** forget her. Your **ghost** will **never** REST.

Fin

1996

MY FRIENDS
AND FELLOW WORKERS .
OUR PLANT IS OBLIGED TO SHUT DOWN .
AND YOUR LABORS ARE NEARLY AT AN END
FOR THE GOOD OF ALL
WE ASK THAT YOU NOW PROCEED TO THE DISINTEGRATION CHAMBER
THANK!

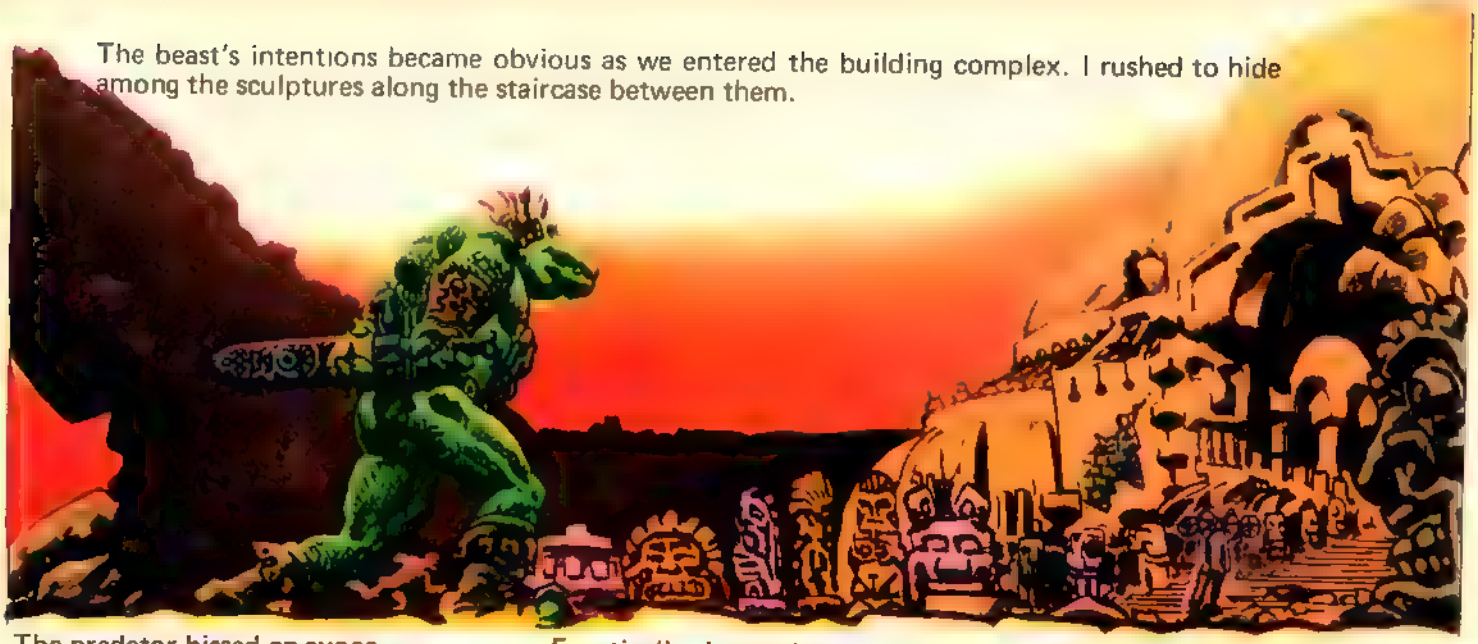
I followed the lizardman,

Who followed the girl,

Whose destination was apparently the architectural anomaly, but her purpose there was still a complete mystery.

DEN

The beast's intentions became obvious as we entered the building complex. I rushed to hide among the sculptures along the staircase between them.



The predator hissed an expectant chuckle.

Frantically I searched for a weapon.

The girl turned and saw the lizard but didn't seem frightened.

I CHARGED!!!

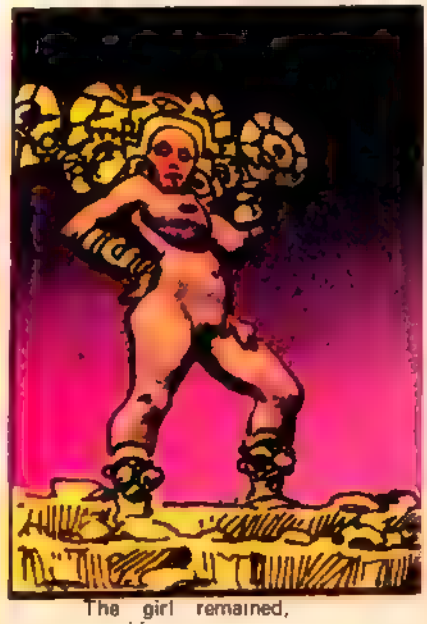
The stone struck the beast

I crashed into him, grabbing for his knife

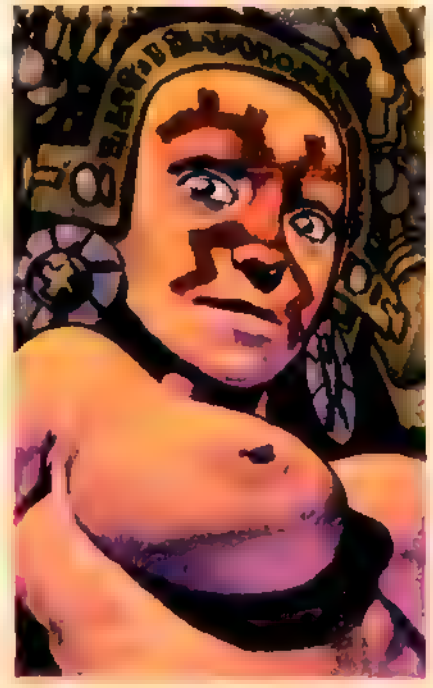
But succeeded only in knocking it away.

The blow should've killed him. He was hardly stunned.

I didn't want to give him a chance to think.

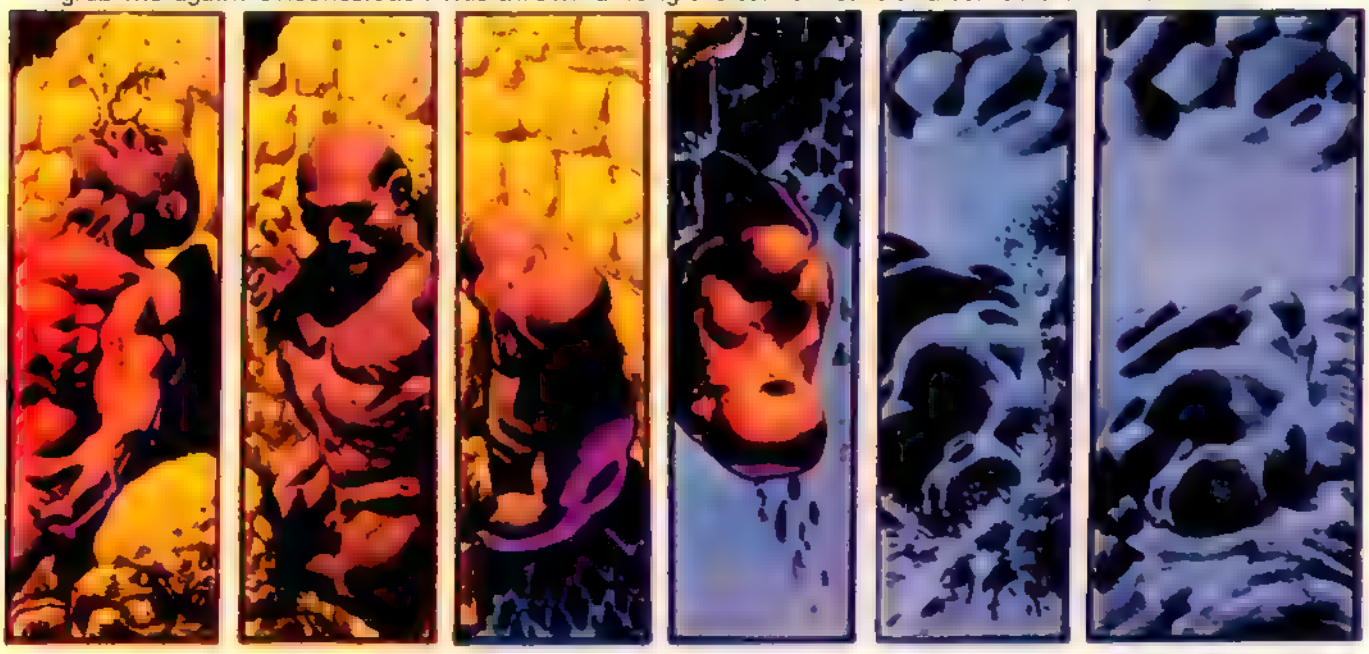


The girl remained, watching.

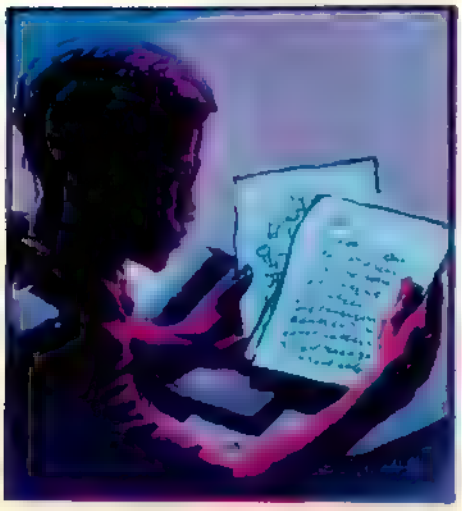


My body made movements unfamiliar to my conscious mind. It was though it had been highly trained and was under the control of another part of my brain.

The lizard's strongest blow caught me unprepared. I guess I thought he was going to close in and grab me again. Unconscious I was thrown among the stone works and fell below the staircase.



Then it came to me. My name is. . .was David Ellis Norman. I was mourning my Uncle Daniel's death. They had never found him but now, after seven years it was legal. Some of his belongings had come into my possession including his collection of Burroughs fantasy novels. In the back of one was a piece of paper with an electronic schematic drawn on it. . .

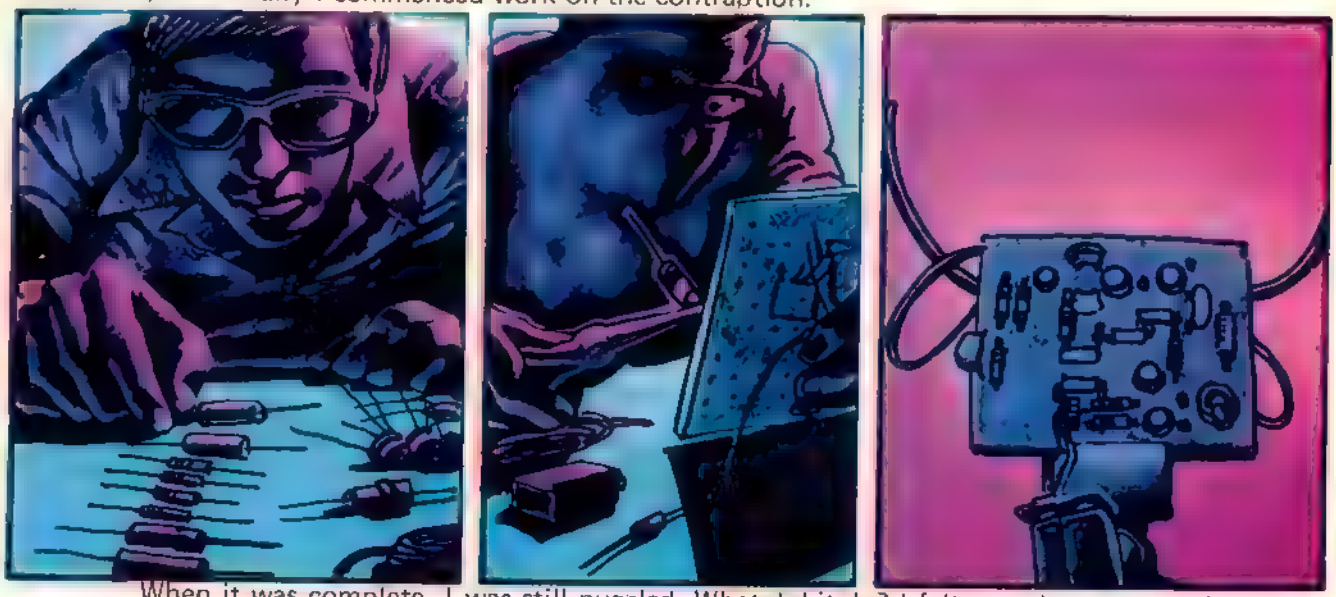


There was also a letter. . .addressed to me.

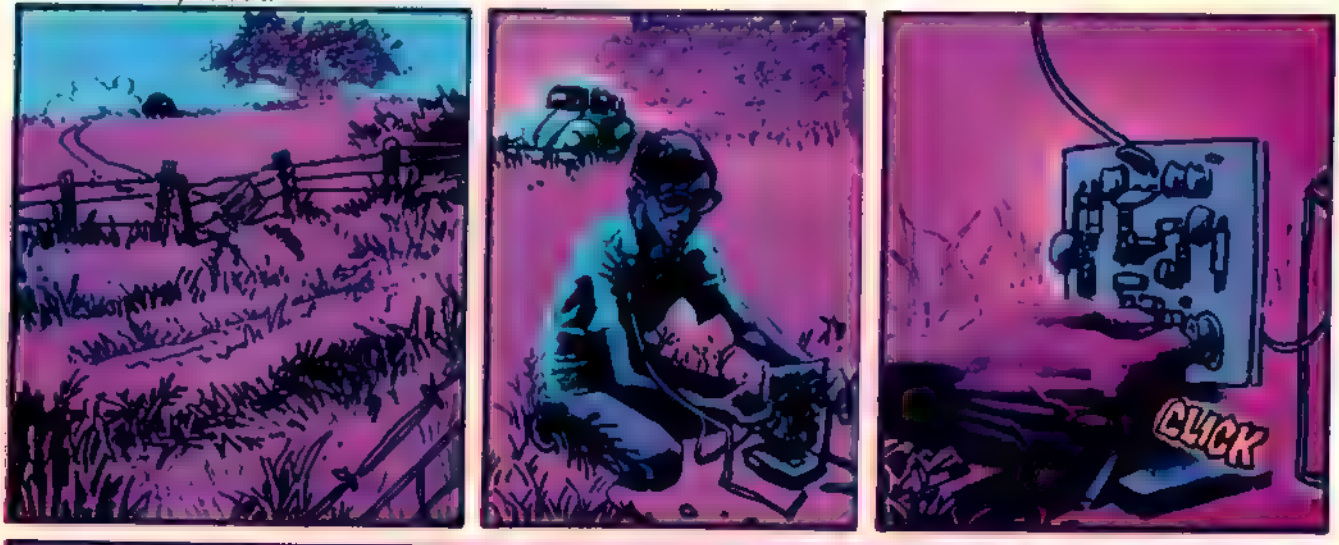
Dear David,
I foresee you reading this some years after my disappearance. It is because we shared so many interests and a kinship that went beyond our common blood, that I write. I may be dead as you read, I have no way of knowing what lies ahead for me in that other world. This much is certain: my chances are better there, despite the dangers, than here, facing certain slow death. You weren't aware of my withering illness. I am slowly losing life; it begins in the limbs and crawls slowly, relentlessly, to finish in the heart. So I bid you farewell and leave while I have the strength and resolution.
Goodbye,
Dan

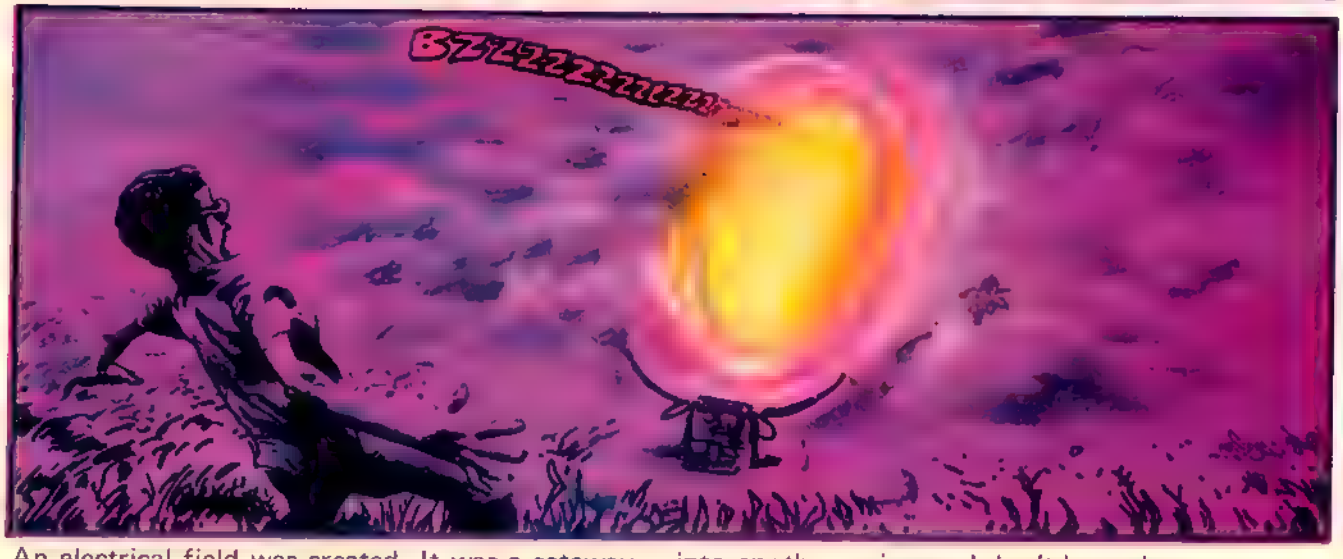
I knew the schematic was a clue. I decided to build it.

Collecting the parts required was not without difficulty. Some were exotic special order items; others had become obsolete. But most were readily available resistors, capacitors, diodes, transistors, etc. Finally I commenced work on the contraption.



When it was complete, I was still puzzled. What did it do? I felt sure that it was a clue to my uncle's disappearance. For fear the thing might explode when I turned it on, also to escape derisive comments of friends and neighbors, I took the device to an abandoned farm area to try it out.

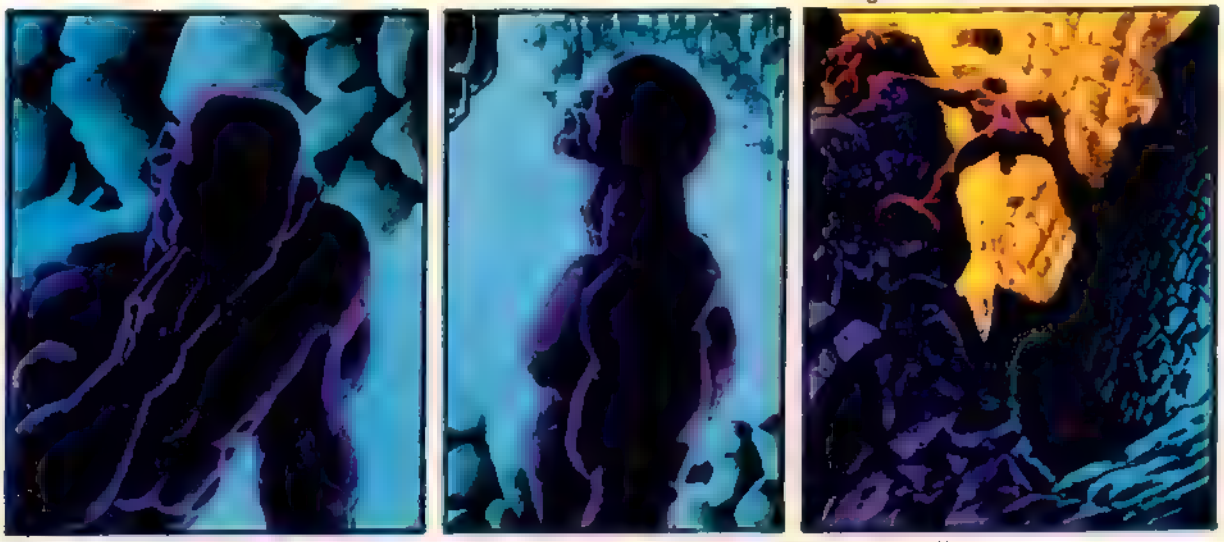



BZZZ

I had to find my uncle. I stepped into the swirling light. . .and lost consciousness.

I reawakened among decayed stonework. I had not found my uncle but there were more urgent matters at hand.

I peered out expecting to see the girl or the lizardman.



The stone porch area was empty. . . Then inhuman sounds shattered the silence.

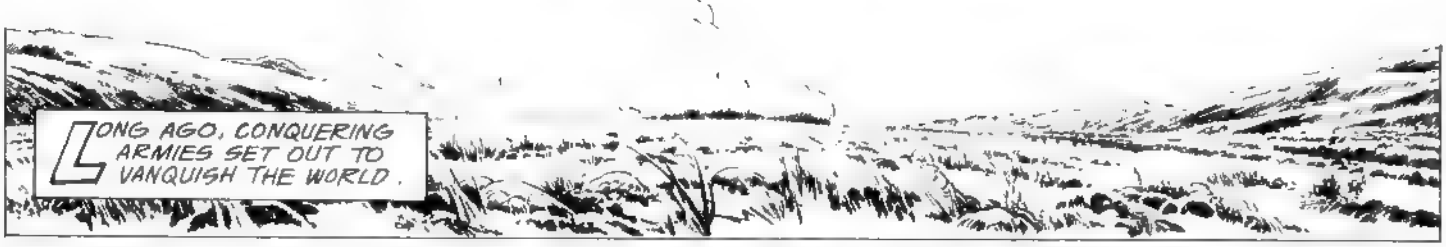
I was ill prepared for the sight that followed.

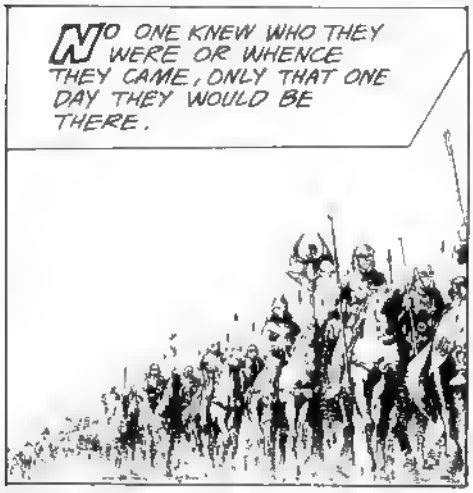
A DRAGON and the Indian girl. They were friends and chewing on the lizard man's carcass. It was a symbiotic relationship, she lured the prey, the dragon did the bloody work.

No sign of Uncle Dan. Did I make the machine right? Have other forces changed since he made his machine?. . . Will I ever get back?. . . Do I WANT to return?. . . I guess I'll have to look around and see. . .

to be continued. . .

CONQUERING ARMIES





IT WAS TWO YEARS AGO, JUST AFTER THE BATTLE OF SABYLE
"WE HAD GONE HUNTING
QUIET, I
LOOK OUT!

AND THAT IS HOW MY BROTHER, OLMAR, SAVED MY LIFE.
AND I THAT WAS HOW I LOST MY FINGERS!
WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?
I OWE HIM MORE THAN I REALIZED I THOUGHT THAT HE HAD GROWN USED TO IT, WITH TIME.

IT'S MY FAULT I WAS QUESTIONING HIM. BUT NOT WITHOUT REASON A PRISONER TOLD ME THAT IN BACK OF THE HILLS, IN THE RUINED TOWER, HE SAW AN OLD MAN WHO KNEW HOW TO HEAL THE MOST GRIEVOUS WOUNDS... AND EVEN MAKE SEVERED LIMBS GROW AGAIN!
WHAT?
LET ME GO, FRIEND!
YOU STAND GUARD IN MY PLACE.
I WILL RETURN BEFORE DAWN.
AH, THOSE TWO!

LATER, IN THE HEALER'S DEN...
HA, YOU FILTHY BEAST! WHAT A PLIGHT YOU HAVE GOTTEN ME INTO / YOU KNOW VERY WELL WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO YOU WHEN I'M, FINISHED WITH HIM!
GRRRR...

WHAT.? YOUR BACK IS BRISTLING ? .. NO .. YOU HAVE SMELLED SOMETHING
SOMEONE OUTSIDE ? DEFINITELY, TONIGHT..

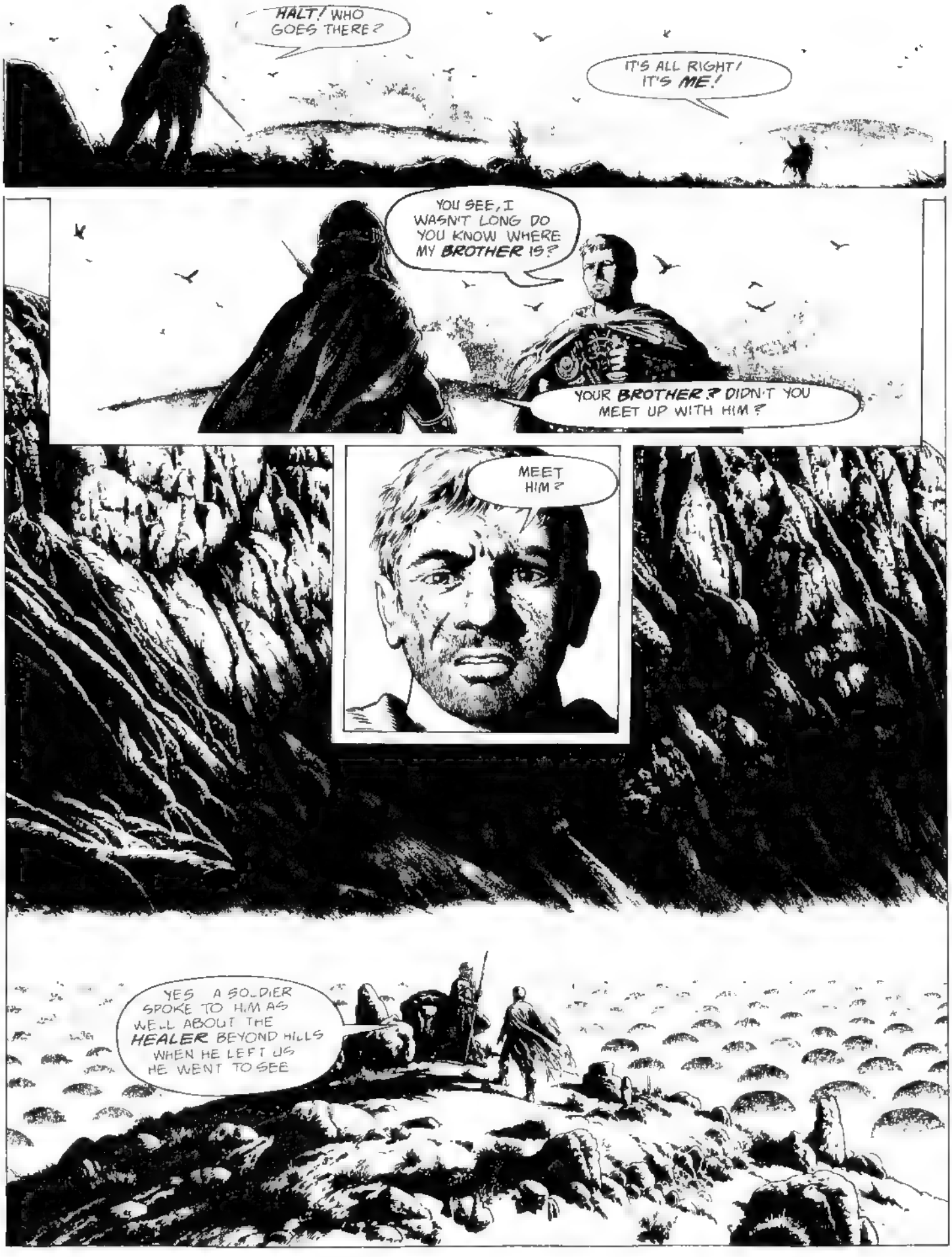
IS SOMEONE THERE? SHOW YOURSELF!
DON'T TRY TO HIDE YOURSELF! I KNOW YOU ARE THERE!
SO...YOU DO NOT WISH TO LEAVE! VERY WELL, YOU SHALL SEE!
YOU SHALL SEE! HI! HI! HI! HI! HI!

SNIF
SNIF
SNIF
GAAA...

AAAARR!

A FINE CHAIR BY A FINE FIRE! WHILE THEY KILL EACH OTHER OUTSIDE! THIS IS THE LIFE!
WHAT IS THAT MOANING?
WHAT IS IT, MY BEAST? WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO YOU?
I AM RETURNING HIM TO YOU

DON'T STRIKE! DON'T STRIKE!
FEAR NOT! I HAVE COME TO BEG A BOON OF YOU!
A BOON? WHAT IS IT?
SOMEONE TOLD ME ABOUT YOU MY BROTHER IS AN AMPUTEE, ACCIDENTALLY.
SAY NO MORE! SAY NO MORE! I KNOW WHAT YOU WANT IT IS DONE.
DONE?
YES, YOU MAY RETURN TO YOUR ENCAMPMENT I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT YOUR BROTHER'S FINGERS WILL HAVE BEGUN TO GROW AGAIN
FAREWELL. UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN.


HALT! WHO GOES THERE?
IT'S ALL RIGHT! IT'S ME!
YOU SEE, I WASN'T LONG DO YOU KNOW WHERE MY BROTHER IS?
YOUR BROTHER? DIDN'T YOU MEET UP WITH HIM?
MEET HIM?
YES A SOLDIER SPOKE TO HIM AS WELL ABOUT THE HEALER BEYOND HILLS WHEN HE LEFT US HE WENT TO SEE

AN HOUR LATER, KARL RETURNED TO COMBAT.

HE **NEVER** SAW THE **TOWER** AGAIN, NOR THE **HEALER, NOR HIS BROTHER.**

THE YEARS PASSED, BUT HE DID NOT **FORGET.**

AND CERTAIN NIGHTS HE WOKE UP **SCREAMING** BECAUSE OF AN **IMAGE:**

HIS BROTHER IN **CHAINS** IN THE CARE OF THE **DOG-MAN.**

HIS RIGHT HAND **NAILED** TO THE **BLOCK.**

HIS FINGERS **GROWING** INTERMINABLY.

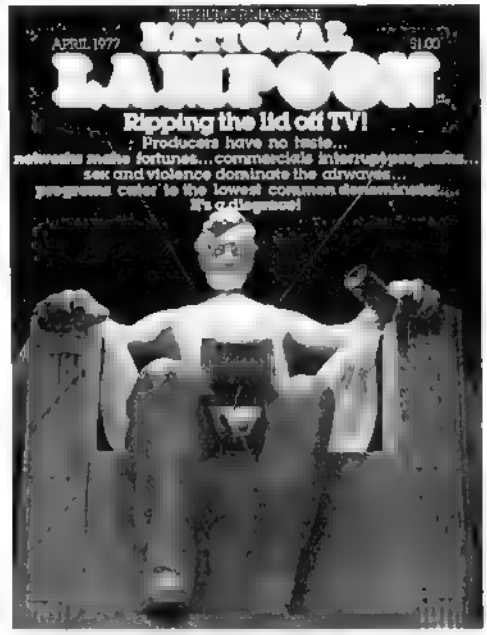
AND THE **HEALER,** WITH HIS **HATCHET,** **CUTTING** THEM DOWN TO SIZE, AND **CHUCKLING.**

-FIN-

ONLY! The *National Lampoon* Dares to Compare!

We submitted the *National Lampoon* to an independent testing institute to see how well we stack up against our leading competitor.

Here are the results:



Big Boffs	YES	NO
Madcap Antics	YES	NO
Articles on Balance of Trade Payments	NO	YES
Mirth	YES	NO
Merriment	YES	NO
Tons of Fun	YES	NO
Reports on Emerging African Nations	NO	YES
Snappy Patter	YES	NO
Exactly 12 Issues a Year	YES	NO
	7YES	2YES

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AGE OF AGES

A GOTHIC SCIENCE-FICTION TRIP TO THE APOCALYPSE

by

Akbar Del Piombo

Collages by

Norman Rubington

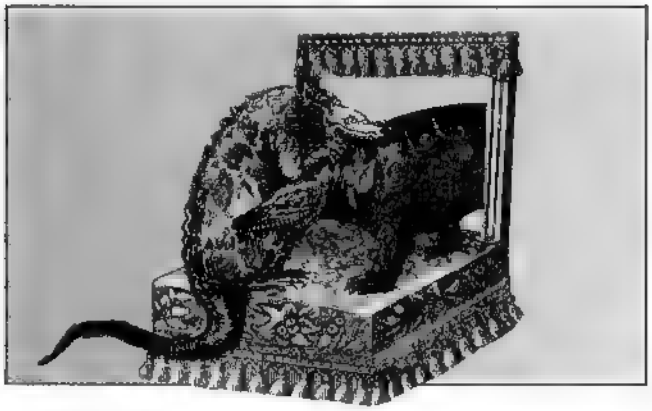
Nineteen-eighty-four was moving right along. If the rumors of a warlock in the White House were correct, he was a benevolent sort, and if he talked to plants it was from his great love for ecology. He inspired everyone to follow in his footsteps. Nature was officially recognized and ecology art became the vogue.

Before starting the business day, bankers give one minute of reverential silence to one of nature's works.

The back-to-nature movement is in full swing with the elite Neo*Pagan Society, seen inaugurating a new breathing zone...

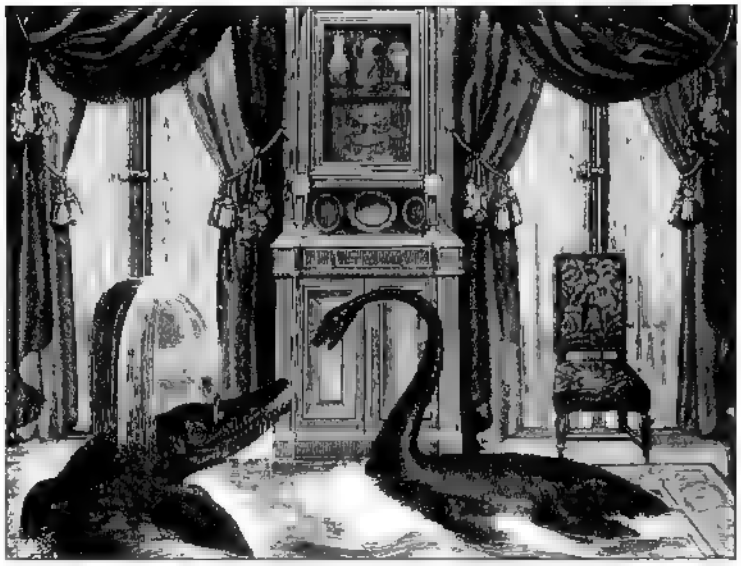
A walk in the park.

Ecology-minded citizen helps his overevolved pet through unaccustomed obstacles.



Domestic Scenes

Critics of such pampering said the world was going to the dogs, but the little beasties never had it so good. Nevertheless, the first signs of reverse evolution soon became apparent

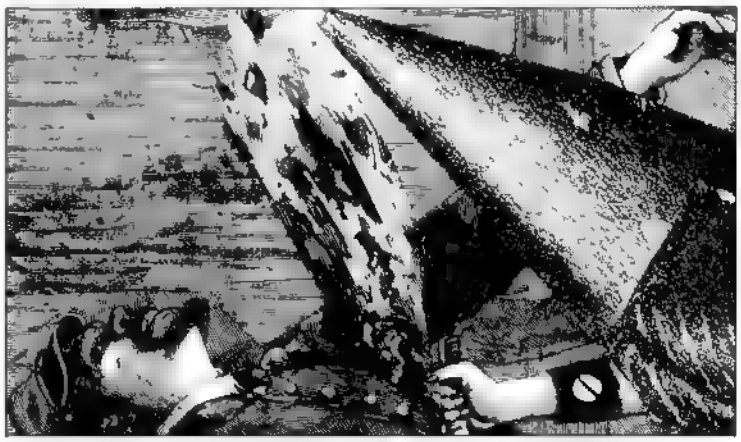


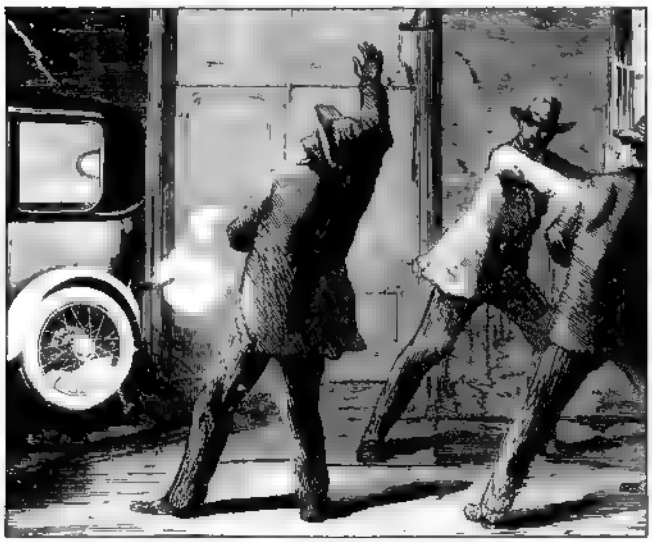
However all is not well.

In the general euphoria, a minor tragedy goes unnoticed The baffling demise of an obscure naturalist mourned by his wife (below), who believed his unnatural end was a return to a previous incarnation

Zombie killers on the loose

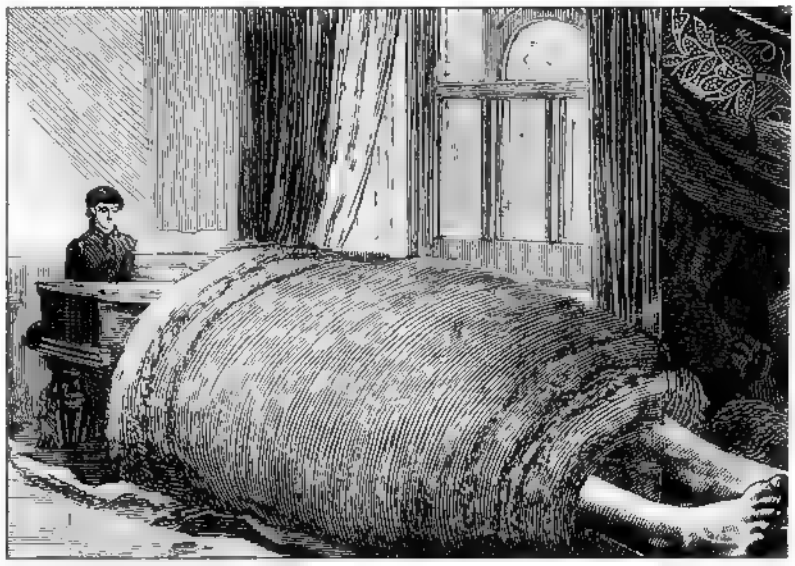
Frightened witnesses report a rash of vicious cop-killers, striking from nowhere at hapless law enforcers



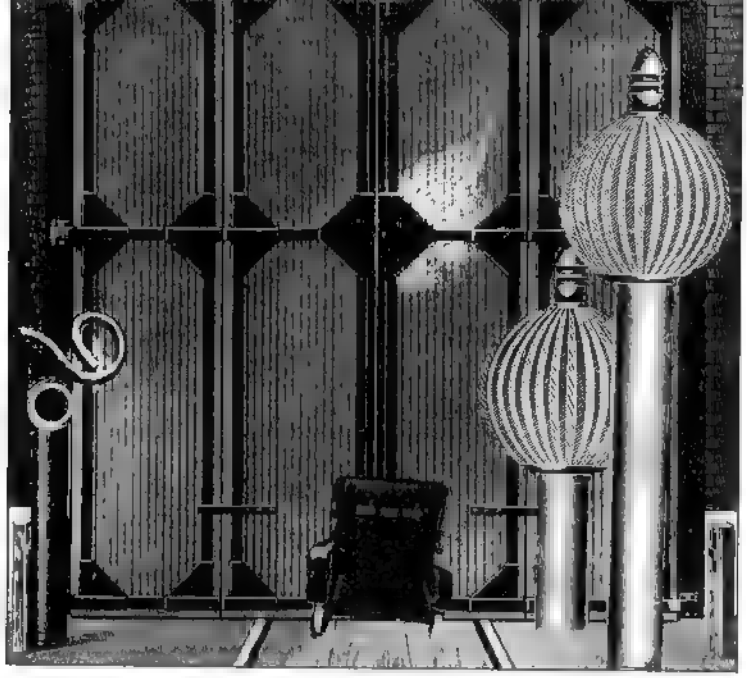


The harassed and bewildered Inspector Muldoon called for Sir Edwin's aid . There was something new in gangland killings.

A vintage Chicago-style gun-down amazes eye witnesses Their reports indicate the vehicle was not only empty it was also floating on air.



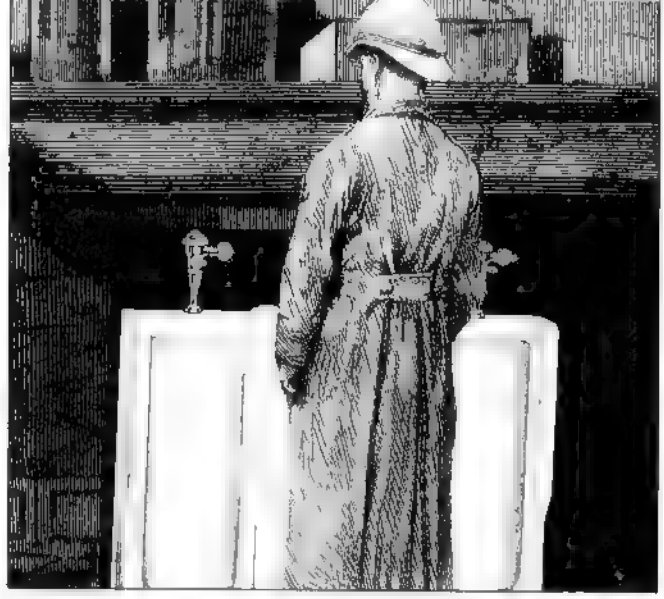
Worse was to follow Against all predictions, Big Brother's reign was short-lived. The news of his sudden demise was kept under wraps, and his body spirited away With this successful cover-up, the reins of power fell into his sister's waiting hands



The Gates of Eden

In a clandestine cross-country trip, Big Brother's body leaves the White House for the fabled region of Middle America. Smuggled past the guards in a shabby vehicle, it awaits its descent to a prodigious subterranean city designed to house the servants of the nation in times of disaster

The air shafts of this underground Shangri-La are molded in graceful motifs from nature, its giant portals reminiscent of the gates of paradise

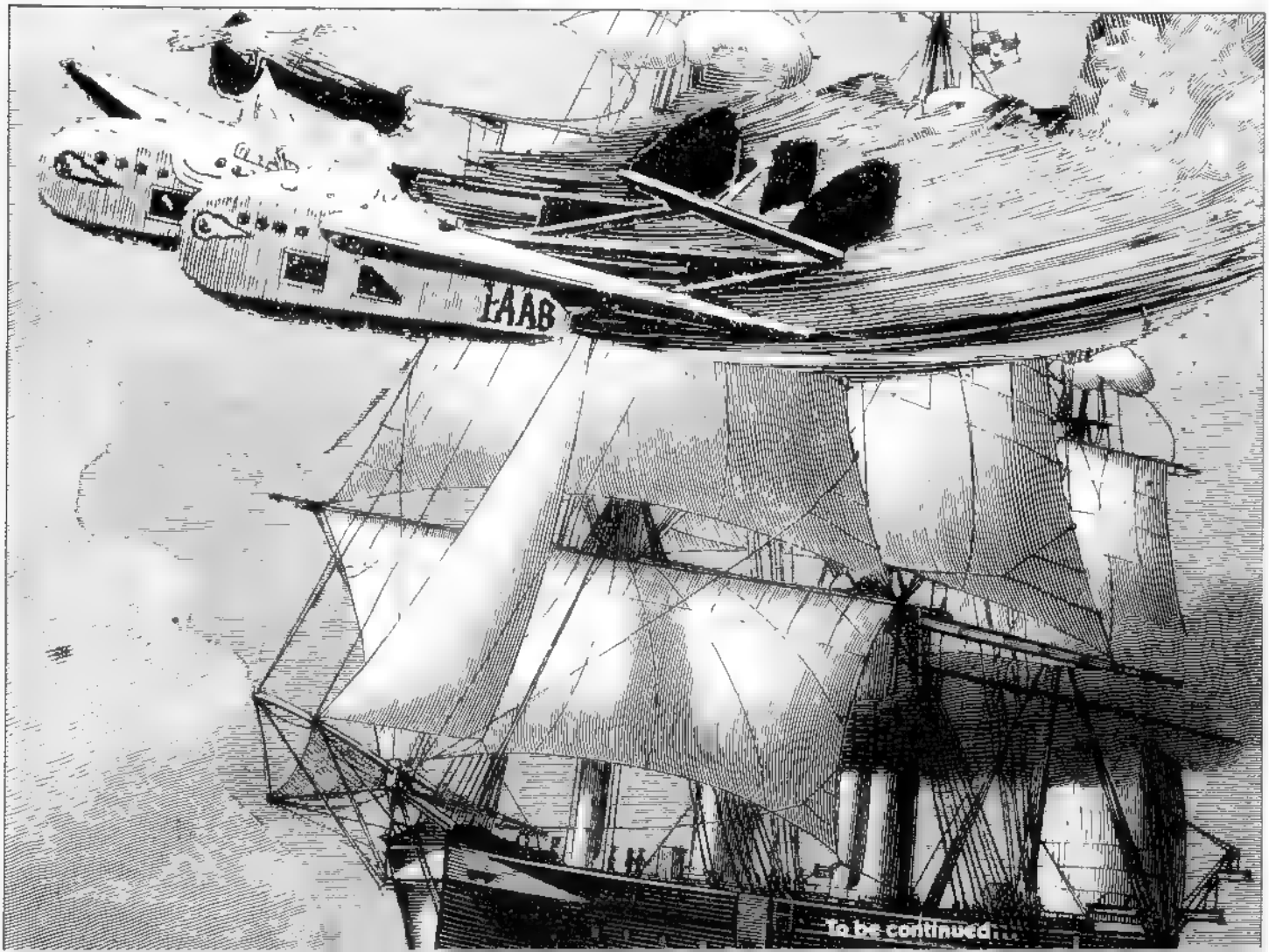


Sir Edwin girds for battle

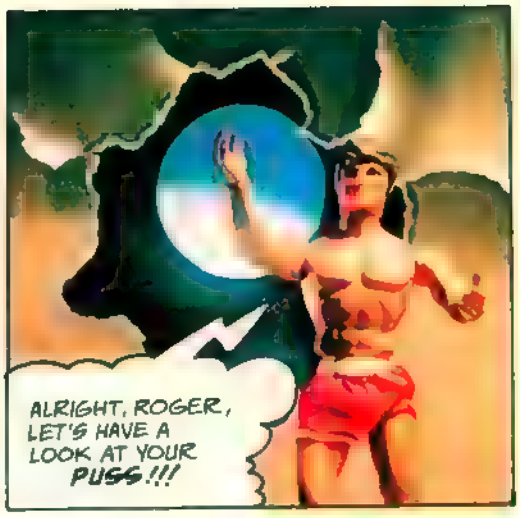
Such were the grim events that burst in on the privacy of Sir Edwin Fuzz. Meditating on the sinister meaning behind these seemingly unrelated events, he determines there is no time to lose before things get out of hand

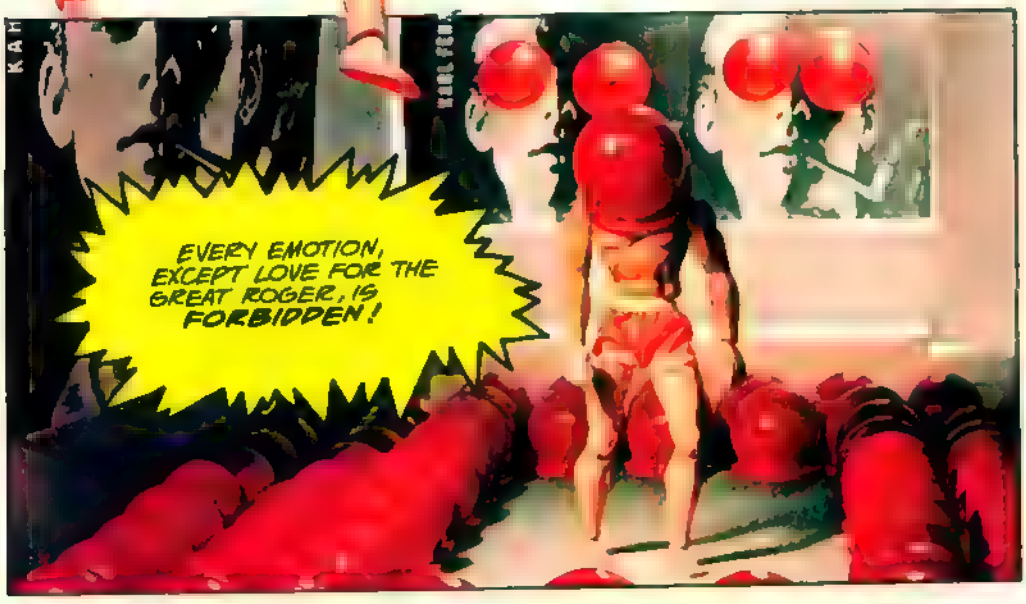
A symbolic encounter

En route on his secret westward flight, Sir Edwin's trendy '30s craft bypasses another nostalgic creation, a vessel full of mystics bound for the East...a strange turning point for technology and the occult...the forces are massing for a gigantic struggle



WE'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE HIM. CAN IT BE HE RULES US ALL ?
IS HE OUR MASTER ? OUR FATHER ? OR... OUR GOD ?
FOR SAFETY'S SAKE, LET'S CALL HIM...
ROGER

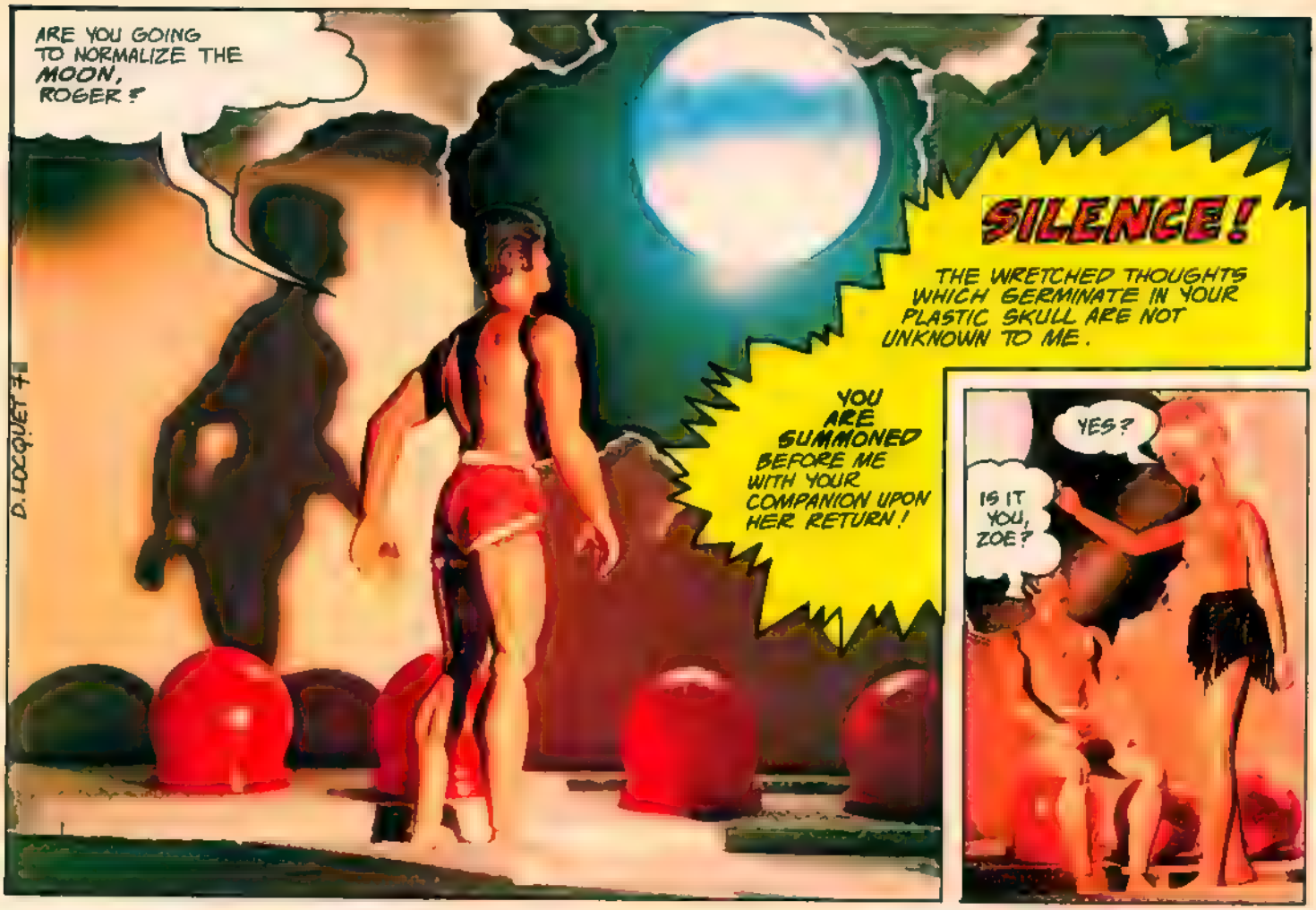




HE HAD DECIDED, FOR "PURPOSES OF EXPLOITATION," TO NORMALIZE MY WIFE.

BUT I WAS FOND OF ZOE, IN SPITE OF THE **FLAWS** IN HER CONSTRUCTION ! THROUGHOUT THE AFFLICTIONS VISITED UPON ME BY ROGER, MY EVERY THOUGHT AND ACTION HAD ONE FOCUS AND ONE MEANING :

ROGER, I WANT YOUR ASS !...


ARE YOU GOING TO NORMALIZE THE MOON, ROGER?
SILENCE!
THE WRETCHED THOUGHTS WHICH GERMINATE IN YOUR PLASTIC SKULL ARE NOT UNKNOWN TO ME.
YOU ARE SUMMONED BEFORE ME WITH YOUR COMPANION UPON HER RETURN!
D. LOCQUET '71
YES?
IS IT YOU, ZOE?

LISTEN, WE'VE GOT TO LEAVE! FLEE ROGER. HE'S GOING TO...
ROGER IS GOOD! ROGER IS JUST! ROGER IS LOVE! HURRY UP, HE AWAITS US!

SHE CANNOT WITHSTAND THE NORMALIZATION. FROM NOW ON, SHE IS **SUBJUGATED**, BODY AND SOUL, TO ROGER'S **LEWDNESS** --TO BE **USED** IN HIS **PERVERSE GAMES**.

ROGER!

WHO **ARE** YOU ? --

--THAT **ALLOWS** YOU TO PLAY WITH ME AS IF I WERE SOME **MASS-PRODUCED DOLL**?!

ROGER!

DON'T YOU HAVE A **HEART**??

PHYSICALLY: CLEAN-SHAVEN. PSYCHOLOGICALLY: PARANOID TENDENCIES REVIEW GUILT MECHANISMS. EMOTIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THOSE OF THE MODEL "JIM." REDUCES HIS ABILITY TO THINK CLEARLY.

ROGER, YOU AREN'T GOING TO DO IT!
SUPPRESSION OF EXISTENTIAL PROBLEMS...
DON'T BE UPSET, JIM, YOU ARE GUARANTEED.
IT'S TIME THAT WE GODS LEARNED TO OVERCOME THESE LITTLE SETBACKS.
THE REPAIR SHOPS ARE NOT THERE FOR NOTHING.
AH, ROGER, WHO IS ALL JUST AND DESERVING OF MY LOVE...
TO BE CONTINUED...

TAKE FLIGHT!

VOYAGE BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES OF YOUR DREAMS...

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THE STAR-DEATH OF

An excerpt from a work in progress, Up the Walls of the World

The woman of this chapter is a beautiful American Black who was subjected to sexual mutilation while on a childhood trip to Kenya. (Ritual clitoridectomy.) Her life since has been of almost unendurable pain and stress and separation from humanity; she has also a trace of TK power—the poltergeist trait, or ability to affect matter by mental force.

In her effort to escape all human contact she becomes a computer programmer and mathematician, and develops an intuitive rapport with TOTAL, the Department of Defense's giant computer complex—including its uncancelled NASA ghost program. Because of her work with an experimental group she becomes unwittingly involved in an extraterrestrial contact with Earth, and before the chapter opens she sought to end her life by plunging into the Destroyer, an enormous icy-black eater of suns

In cold black nowhere a tiny thing will not die.

Alone in dark immensity, the energy-configuration that has been a life is almost extinguished. It is stripped of all qualities, shrunk to a single point of not-death in a universe of deathliness. Blind and mindless it strives against annihilation, fighting with no weapons but its puny naked will.

Aeons earlier it had shot here seeking obliteration. But at the end, the life at its core will not let go.

It is alone, alone in the ultimate icy void, falling without motion ever deeper into dark nothingness. Only a fading spark strains, strives for some possibility, some dimension or current or difference to save it from the final dark. It flails limblessly, grasps nothing, struggles without strength or hope against the overwhelming death around it. Deeper and deeper it is swallowed. Its last existence flickers, it is almost gone.

But at this final instant its immaterial being meets an infinitesimal resistance. Something—something is tenuously touched!

Too weak even to feel reprieve, the spark clutches, clings to the unknown contact. And as it does, slow help comes to it. The faltering energy finds itself minutely sustained; the potential gradient that had fallen nearly to zero halts, and begins painfully to steepen again. After an unknown time it is able to stabilize. Now it is more than a point. It becomes a faint but growing constellation around the nucleus. Fragments of its dead self come back to spectral being.

With them comes a first emotion of life—fear. Hideous images of being strangled, frozen, asphyxiated, destroyed in myriad terrifying ways assault it. The being struggles harder, a frantic mote in the maw of death. It clings to the unknown sustenance, fighting simply to continue to be. And as it strives it strengthens, recruiting the shadowy energy-circuits and complexities of its former life. Presently there comes to it a kind of half-consciousness, and it perceives mistily that it cannot be strangled nor frozen, since it is without breath or pulse in infinite dark. These are only spectres of sensation evoked by terror of the huge menace all around. Knowing itself dead yet not-dead, it tries fiercely to collect itself, to recreate its shattered entity. It drives toward existence as a drowner drives toward air, it exerts stress upon the texture of non-being. Strength grows in it, it presses hard and harder against nothingness. Pressure mounts, a substanceless film bulges without dimension. Until suddenly nothingness yields, and there is a blossoming, tearing pain like orgasmal birth.

The ghostly circuitry of a living woman exists again, strung out between the stars.

The sense of re-existence is acute, paroxysmal. The being convulses in long shudders of awareness. With wonder it perceives itself, knows that it has coherence, complexity, a history, even a name.

It is Margaret Omah.

No! She clenches herself away, would shriek out if she could. The name is a damnation, it brings pouring in on her the pain of a life she had meant only to end. What cruelty is this, why is she not dead?

She shrinks, trying to cancel consciousness, disappear from being. But she cannot; she senses that her despair is fueling the energy that sustains her. Her human life streams back, activates even the echo of her last human thought: My insurance Donny will be all right.

What dreadful happening has cheated her of death?

Sick and grieving she drifts, uncaring that the unknown sustenance continues. The energy that is her life augments and completes itself in phantom structure. And at length her despair is penetrated by dull puzzlement. Something is different. At first idly, then with sharpening attention she examines this strangeness. Can it be true?

Warily, she lets her thoughts open, lets herself be known to herself, and finds astonishment.

It is true! The pain and tension that hammered at her nerves are gone. Nothing hurts her now.

She can scarcely believe it. For so long she lived in lacerated shame, her body an aching agony without release. Her only desire was to hold the psychic wound quiet, to escape to levels of the mind beyond its reach.

Now it is gone. Feeling herself deliciously unbodied she stretches immaterially, as one would stretch exhaustedly upon cool sheets. Yes! Yes! The relief holds, exquisite as bare limbs lapped in eiderdown. Whatever remains of her has left her body and its pain behind forever. She does not know or care what or where she is, marvels only at the sweetness of release.

The memory of the brief bliss she had once felt from a drug brushes her, but that was far-off and unreal. This, whatever this spectral half-life is, is real. Exultance, amazement floods her.

She is dead—and free!

Letting herself sense it fully, she would laugh aloud in this place of death if she had anything to laugh with. But laughter is unnecessary here; the emotion itself suffices. Relaxed as she had never been in life, she exists as a substanceless smile.

How long the simple joy of no-pain lasts she has no idea; here time is not. But finally a human curiosity of place stirs in her. She is, she knows, totally alone. That does not trouble her, she had always been locked in loneliness. Now she wishes simply to understand this place, if she is in a universe where place has meaning. Specific memories come to her; she recalls her wild flight through the void, among incarnations flashing like dreams, her final plunge toward the deathly blackness. It had seemed to her then to be a lethal hole in space, a sure and ultimate extinction. Is she now somehow alive *in* that?

The thought does not frighten her in her new comfort. But the desire grows in her to know more. Without material senses

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MARGARET OMALI

by James Tiptree, Jr.

or receptors she quests around herself, aware that she must not let go of the strange cold pinpoint of energy that sustains her life. What can it be, what is she based on? She has heard of superconductors, of circuits that cycle forever near the cold of ultimate zero. Perhaps she is drawing strength from something like that. But what is out there? The strange small sense she has never let herself think of is still with her; she gathers it and tries to outreach, a feeling-outward of inquiring life.

Nothing. She reaches farther and touches real death.

The contact is dreadful She cowers in upon herself, knowing that something cold, alien and terrible is out there, nearby Is it aware of her?

She waits Nothing happens. The coldness she had touched does not seem to be moving, comes no closer. She listens without ears, attends with all her being for something, anything to tell her more. Still nothing. But the void has dimension now. There, along *that* direction, is danger.

She must recoil, get farther from it, but she dares not let go of the anchor-source of her strange life. She strains away to her utmost, searching, probing Still nothing. But wait—now she senses, fainter than silence, an impalpable tendril of presence just at the margin of her ken. She attends hungrily, trying to tune herself to it

And a conviction grows: it is not hostile. It has in fact a reassuring *ordinary* quality, like some familiar small comfort of her lost life. What can it be? It seems—yes it is somehow beckoning her, like a hand outstretched to lead her away from the dangers of this place.

With all her small might she focuses out toward it. And the fringes of her being touch a gossamer point. A density, another of the strange contacts lies there. Dare she try to transfer to it? *Come*, the faint summons urges from beyond.

She gathers her courage, marshalls her being. Her mind enacts the image of a woman leaping from stone to stone across an immense dark river, *I dare!* She lets go her base and sends herself wholly across the void to coalesce around the new support.

Success! She knows how she has moved physically, in whatever space this is. She has moved away from the deadly touch, over what distance she has no idea, an atom's width or light-year. And the act of will has strengthened her She feels her own intricate existence triumphant in the dark, and tries to scan around.

The faint beckoning something is definitely stronger here. *Come! This way.*

Can she continue? Again she reaches with her mind, and again finds contact. Another of the cold life-sources is there. Without hesitation she leaps to it and begins to search anew. Yes! There are more. And the friendly call is clearer. In marvelling excitement she leaps, or flows, or hurls herself again and again. She is mastering the rhythm, she can move here in abyssal night.

The image of stepping-stones has vanished. As she moves she knows herself as nothing woman-shaped, but a pattern of energy flashing along charged points. Flow, gather, surge—she is energy discharging through capacitors, perhaps. But a structure, she thinks; a very complex configuration, the spectral texture of a human mind. And as she moves another image comes to her, so that she pauses for a moment in wonder. Is she something like a computer program? A ghostly program prowling the elements of some unimaginable circuitry?

The thought delights her She does not believe in heaven or gods or demons or any hell beyond the life she had known, but she has seen real ghosts in her computer read-out screens. She knows she is dead and she had never been very human. To be a free, untormented ghost-program is not frightening.

Perhaps the danger she had felt was some design to cancel her, to flush her out of existence as they had attempted to flush out TOTAL's ghosts?

No, she decides. I will not be evicted. I will maintain this new sweet life awhile, even as nothing in the cold and dark But what is this small calling presence or energy which she has been following? It is very close now, she can sense its urgency. What is it? Is it perhaps another like herself here in the paths of death?

The thought displeases her. She thinks toward it demandingly, striving to shape interrogation. *Who are you? What is there?*

Nothing answers her at first, only the ever-stronger summoning, an almost tangible directional desire. Like a dog tugging at her coat, willing her to follow.

What are you? Tell me! No answer; but she realizes abruptly that an image has formed in her mind's eye, a glimmering vision like a pallid rectangular shape rising through black water. It is a computer console.

Is she imagining this? As she attends to it the image strengthens. She can make out the keyboards, the dials, the read-out screen and reel decks above. Why, it is her familiar office console, she has spent years at those grey, red, blue keys; there is even the stain where ditto-fluid was spilled. It is hallucinatory, it quivers or shimmers like an after-image, floating on the darkness that presses around and through it. But it is no ordinary vision; she wills it away, but still it will not go.

Puzzled, the thought comes to her to activate it. Instantly there is a vivid kinaesthetic sensation of her own arm moving, she sees the long dark fingers that are no longer hers float out and press the toggle. *On.*

At the same moment the screen flickers to life. The symbol is clear, a tiny blue arabesque in black immensity:

$$\int_0^{T\infty} f(t)\,dt$$

It is the integral of time to plus or minus infinity, the "signature" of TOTAL's unquenchable ghost!

Half-amused, half-annoyed, she probes at her own thought. Is she recreating memory or is this some real manifestation of the condition she has waked to? It holds; it seems so real. Well, if she is herself a ghost-program, what more likely than that another should be here? Has her mind somehow got into TOTAL? She hopes not; she had been sure that she was far from Earth. No matter, she decides. It's all fantasy, a dead mind dreaming.

As she had done so often before, she makes no effort to cancel the intruding program, but instead lets her hallucinative fingers tap out a holding code. The screen flashes TIME-INDEPENDENT STORE and vanishes from her mind

With that the sense of the calling awareness comes back in force. *Come! Follow me!* The friendly quality is unmistakable now.

Fantasy upon fantasy. Bemused, she yields and lets herself

99999999.8

flow from invisible point to point in the desired direction, as she has learned to do I am in the underworld with my faithful computer, she thinks. I am being led through the land of death by a friendly computer program. Perhaps it likes you, someone had said. Perhaps it does, or at least the crazy ghost-program does. She is sure she senses a strange amicable intent, unliving, cool yet warm The marvel of the complexity of the great electronic ganglia comes to her again. Could it have been, was it, somehow a real base of life?

The idea seems more than fantasy here, following insubstantiality through nowhere. More memories awake She had never had nor desired telepathy, the contact of human minds; but some abstraction of energy-in-complexity had always touched her in a deep, peculiar way. She empathized with it. Working with TOTAL she had always felt in more than technical rapport, some bond beyond the mere program being executed. She had never consciously thought about this; it was of the same almost shameful secret nature as her flashes of power over real matter A crazy thing. Perhaps she was not very human. But if structured energy achieved a kind of life, would she not have access to it?

The idea grows and flashes into conviction. She is sure now that she recognizes the entity she is following, a computer life somehow tuned to hers. But where, in what strange universe are they?

She has been increasingly aware that their dreamlike progress is changing course, the route is not straight. And it is hazardous; she is receiving now urgent demands to hurry, now a sense of being warned back. It is weirdly like a child's game. But the danger here is not imaginary; again and again she feels a brush of icy menace. Is she being led stealthily through a fortress? Are they escaping? Or are they going ever-deeper into the heart of the immense enemy, to its very brain, perhaps?

Deeper, she thinks; danger seems to lie now on all sides, as if they are creeping through secret conduits into an inmost stronghold. Vast unknown energies are all about; the void is not quite empty here. Human fear touches her, and she hesitates. But the urgent pleading intensifies, begs her to go on. She does. The nothingness around her densens. Surely she is nearing some end.

At that moment all urgency to motion ceases, and she knows that she has arrived. The destination, the center, the mighty nexus of this universe lies just beyond. Warily she gathers herself. *What is here?*

As it had done before, the console-image rises to life in her mind. This time the screen is lit. She reads:

//NO-ENTRY-EXCEPT-TO- AUTHORISED-PERSONNEL//

For a timeless instant that which had been Margaret Omali tries to laugh, would laugh, exists as laughter in the dreadful dark

The absurd message brightens, changes to TOTAL's time-signature, then runs through an array of vectors she recognizes as a loop in the NASA space-voyage simulation, ending with a special-exit sequence and repeats:

//NO-ENTRY-TO-OTHER- THAN-AUTHORISED- PERSONNEL//

Slowly, she understands. This is communication; somehow a mind that is not a mind, an unliving life, is trying to link with hers. How does it know her? Is it possible that the same keys that gave her entry to TOTAL were a two-way channel, gave TOTAL some real access to her? Does it know her as a program called human?

No matter. She has the message: This is a portal.

Here is the interface with some unknown concentration of power and information. She can go in. But the decision is forever. Once inside, once "authorised," she will be meshed with whatever lies beyond

Past this point, she thinks, I won't be human any more. The thought troubles her briefly But the presence she has followed is waiting, emanating its promise and warning. A cold beauty seems to call to her, a vista of no earthly dimensions. What does she care for the humanity she had known?

Deliberately disregarding a last faint pulse of mortal fear, she focuses on the darkness ahead. A silent tide of power seems to rise against her, cold, cold and enormous. But she has power, too. *Here, push here!* TOTAL seems to call. She gathers her weird small sense of force and sends it wholly at the interface, lunges mindwise at the enveloping black. *I AM AUTHORISED!*

Disorientation takes her, consciousness fractures. For an endless moment she is only a cloud of will in motion, suffering immense compression like a huge black squeeze. *I WILL!*

—And the barrier yields.

She is through, she has come into the unknown power's heart

Slowly she collects herself, not feeling, at first, very different. But she is not in silence any more. This space is structured with directional energies, pulse-trains of signals on myriad unknown bands New senses.

She puzzles briefly, trying to make these strange inputs come clear. She is on the verge of understanding, her structure is merging with detector-circuits undreamed-of. She is not at all frightened, only eager for some vast new mode of being that lies near. There is no sense of menace any more; only a peculiar cold sadness which is not hers It comes to her with no surprise that she is no longer mobile. She will not leave this place; she has no desire to.

As she feels outward mentally, the time-signature of TOTAL recurs insistently to her intention. So the small ghost is with her here, linked to these mysteries yet apart. Will it be her access, as it had in life?

Experimentally, she wills a master circuit, flicks a phantom switch. *Board On!*

In answer, a spectral console springs up around her, merged with her old familiar board. But this is an apparition glimmering into strange dimensions, a vast control-panel of dreams whose keys bear cryptic symbols.

She studies it, trying to grasp the layout. As she does so, portions of the great board seem to light up in focus as if an invisible spotlight is moving from one to the next with her mind. At the same time she has a brilliant image of her own fingers hovering curiously over the keys. The vision is far more vivid than before; this place is potent. Thought-structures are strong here, as if she could create reality by will.

The thought amuses her. She stretches out her dream-fingers as she had in life, feeling herself drawing on a thread of secret power. Her strange flashes of efficacy over matter are stronger, steadier here. The unknown potency of this void is *compatible*, reinforcing and resonating on a band which is more than a frequency, in which she shares.

On impulse she holds up her dream-hand and bends down the long familiar fingers one by one, counting in binary mode: 00001, 00010, 00011, 00100.. The mental construct holds, runs off to $2^5 - 1$, thirty-one. Why, she can do anything!

Can she create? Experimentally she wills her hand to hold a bunch of white roses. They are there. Perfume, she thinks—and the scent she had loved wafts to her nonexistent nostrils For a moment she lets herself exist in pleasure. The thought comes to her that she could will herself an intact body, be as she had been as a child before—before what she will not think of But the idea is faint, far-off; she tosses it up and away with the roses. They turn to a cascade of sparks, wink out as they fall toward the shadowy tiers. The huge console seems to be still waiting enigmatically for her attention.

As she surveys it again, she becomes aware of a curious pull or emphasis trying to draw her mind's eye. Again and again she finds herself considering a section at the center, close by TOTAL's familiar keys. A single roll-over switch gleams there. She concentrates on it, pointing a meditative finger. The surface around it shines, the switch is of an unknown color,

surmounted by one symbol. It is very clearly in the Off position.

As she attends to it, an almost tangible sense of pleading pressure comes to her and TOTAL's small read-out lights.

//ACTIVATE//

Almost her hallucinatory finger presses the switch and then she pauses. That image cloaks real power, she understands. It is a connection or interface with something vast and real. Is this why the computer-spirit has brought her here, so that her own small power may give some necessary push, initiate real access? Does TOTAL "want" her to manipulate an actual connection on behalf of whatever dark presence or machinery surrounds her? Genially she recalls the earthly TOTAL's appetite for access, the spontaneous linkages it seemed to have achieved. Has it found some ghostly ultimate network here in the dark?

//ACTIVATE·ACTIVATE· ACTIVATE//

The energic constellation that had been Margaret Omali considers the plea, and a fast human willfulness awakes. She is not yet a phantom, a mere pliable pawn. She will not comply with this directive...yet. Quite humanly, she is tired of acting in mystery. She has come through dangers and blackness to this place of power and now she has some mental desires to fulfill. Before assenting further, she will know where she is and among what powers and conditions this strange life is set.

How will she get answers, here?

Deliberately she summons TOTAL to the small strange vein of power in her mind, and frames a command to data-access, her thoughts sketching and shaping a program of real-time inputs of fact and space. Am I in a computer? Is this a dream? Her familiar keyboard glimmers before her, her fingers go to it and firmly press TOTAL's keys.

Query this location. Display.

With a great soundless rush the blackness around her vanishes. She is floating in a universe of jewelled lights.

It worked, she exults. I have power—and then all thought is inundated by sheer magnificence. On every side, above, below, before, beyond, blaze steady fires of amethyst and topaz and ruby, emerald and diamond and ultramarine—drift upon drift of them, burning against blackness or veiled in filaments and gauzes of hypnotic allure.

They are, she realizes slowly, stars. The unwinking suns of space. She is floating amid the glory of the universe, seeing without eyes the incomprehensible vast unhuman beauty of the void. Her mind which had always flinched from the hot closeness of human color is enchanted with this infinity of spectral fires.

But a vague doubt troubles her. Is this real? Someone had told her of the stars; is all this merely some simulacrum of her dead and dreaming human mind?

How can she test? She selects a beautiful pair of sapphire and yellow suns.

Magnify.

Obediently, they grow, seem to approach and separate, and reveal a dim violet companion, all filmed in a wispy nebula in which are points of light. At the same time she becomes aware of a rise in input on one of the unregarded bands, as if these stars were giving off a train of signals. The impression of reality is overwhelming. But still she doubts.

She turns to TOTAL's keyboard, thinking hard. What would unmask a dream? At length she frames a demand on TOTAL's memory-banks.

Specify.

The screen lights.

//BETA·CYGNUS//COMMON·NAME· ALBIREO·DERIVED·FROM·ERROR ·IN· INTERPRETATION·OF·ALMAGEST· 1515// MAGS·5.5·4.5// PA·OSS// SE 34.4 //SPECTRAL·CLASS·OF· PRIMARY·AS

Her attention goes back to the triple beauties, considering. The names Beta Cygnis, Albireo, are utterly unknown to her, all these data could not have come from her human mind. This must be real. Somehow she can call up earthly information, here between the stars.

How this could be does not trouble her; she is too far from human considerations; she no longer remembers NASA, nor the flap about TOTAL's wiped memory-cores. She merely accepts it as one more aspect of this wondrous death and feels her soul smile. In due course she may inquire further; when she is moved to it, she may probe, perhaps, the nature of this huge cold power whose perceptions she seems to share. Now she is content to exist at ease, to dream amid marvels.

The odd energy-output of the brilliant triple system she has summoned presently attracts her curiosity, and she puts another question to TOTAL.

Query. Is life there?

//AFFIRMATIVE//

the screen responds. And the peculiar pulse-trains seem to amplify, as if unknown receptors had been tuned to them.

She "listens" uncomprehendingly, amused by this new dimension of experience, and sensing vaguely that some undefinable significance has been evoked. But if this is "life" she can make nothing of it. I am not concerned with life, she thinks, and dismisses Beta Cygnis. Compliantly the pulse-trains fade, the splendid triple system fades back into the jewel-drifts of space.

But in another dimension of her mind, the ghostly center-panel of the great console still shows its unknown switch; she senses still the faint urgency. What unimaginable program would it execute? She wonders briefly and again dismisses it. For the moment she wants nothing more.

Her attention returns to the outer radiance in which she floats, and now she becomes aware of something new. Motion is here; slow but increasingly perceptible. Like themes of silent music, the orbital elements of the nearer stars reveal themselves to her mind. Suns weave hugely about each other, develop subcomponents of direction, or glide in concert athwart a general flow. Slowly the motion spreads away to the farthest reaches, until the whole is in sublime and complex dance.

Delighted, she bends all her thought on this new wonder, understanding that somehow her phantom senses have slowed, or speeded, to a cosmic scale. Beyond the sheer splendor of the fires of space she now sees a deeper, causal magnificence. She can almost sense directly the interlocking webworks of field forces, the lawfulness of every accidental configuration. And more: beneath the macro-order, if she cares to look, there is revealed the play of another lawfulness, that of the acutely small. The stars are not constant, but changing; they alter in color, shrink or swell or blaze to slow immense explosions. All this she understands as the expression of subatomic transformations and events. The ultimate minute causalities are hers too, when she wills to look deep.

Her human mind that since childhood had yearned dimly toward the enchantment of relation, had groped toward it beneath the veil of number and symbol, experiences a long slow gasp of immaterial rapture. Here is the beloved naked to her view.

Time no longer exists. What had been Margaret Omali slips toward irreversible fusion with something huge and alien whose powers she partially shares. A last corner of her personality laughs with a child's purity, envisioning a vast control room of the stars. Of herself she knows only that she exists in peace and exaltation. The grandeur of the universe unfolds as the tapestry of her understanding. She opens herself entirely to the pure, cold pleasure. The mind that had been a human woman floats out to lose itself in the justice of the play of suns and atoms, the intricate glories of cosmologic cause.

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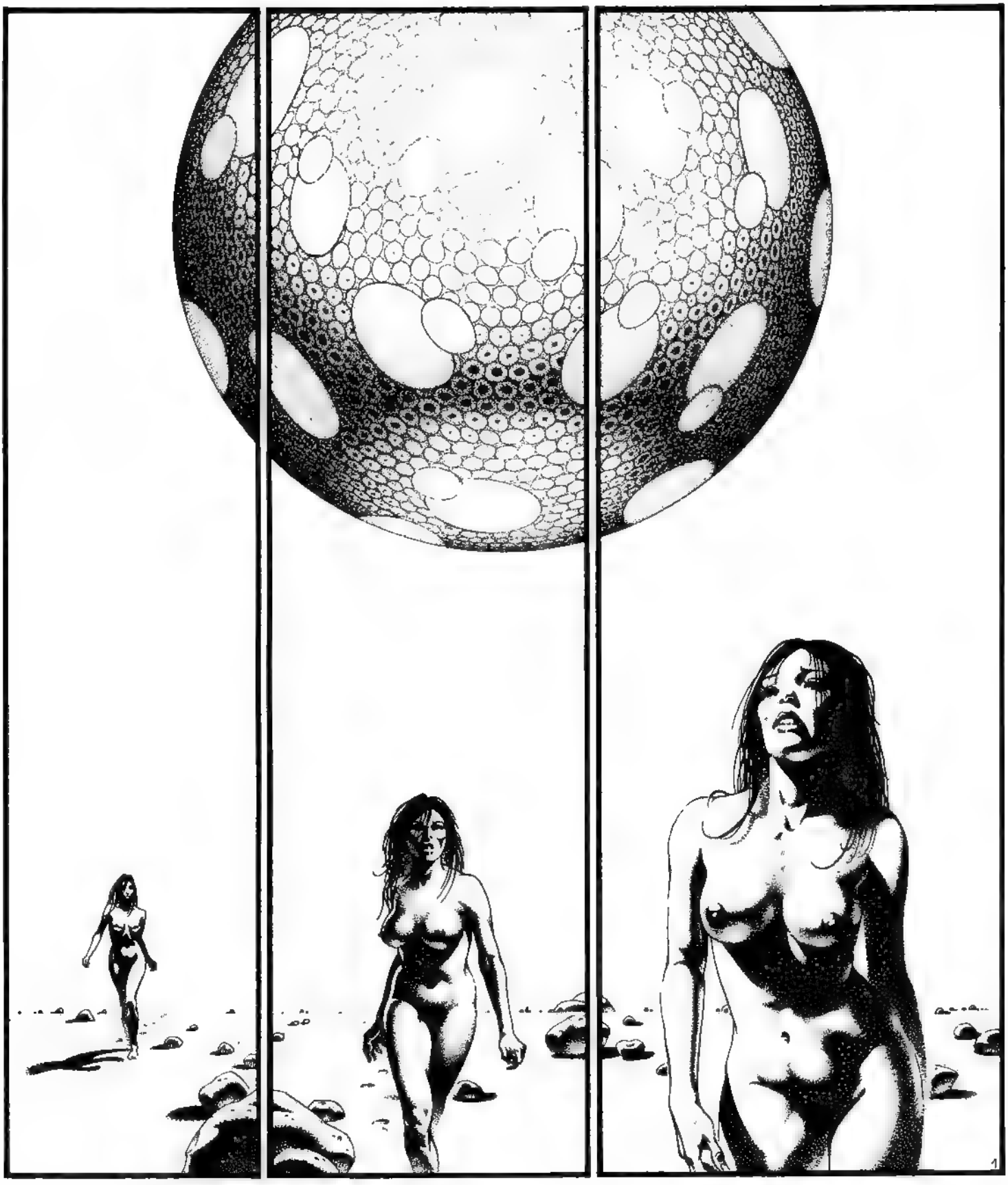

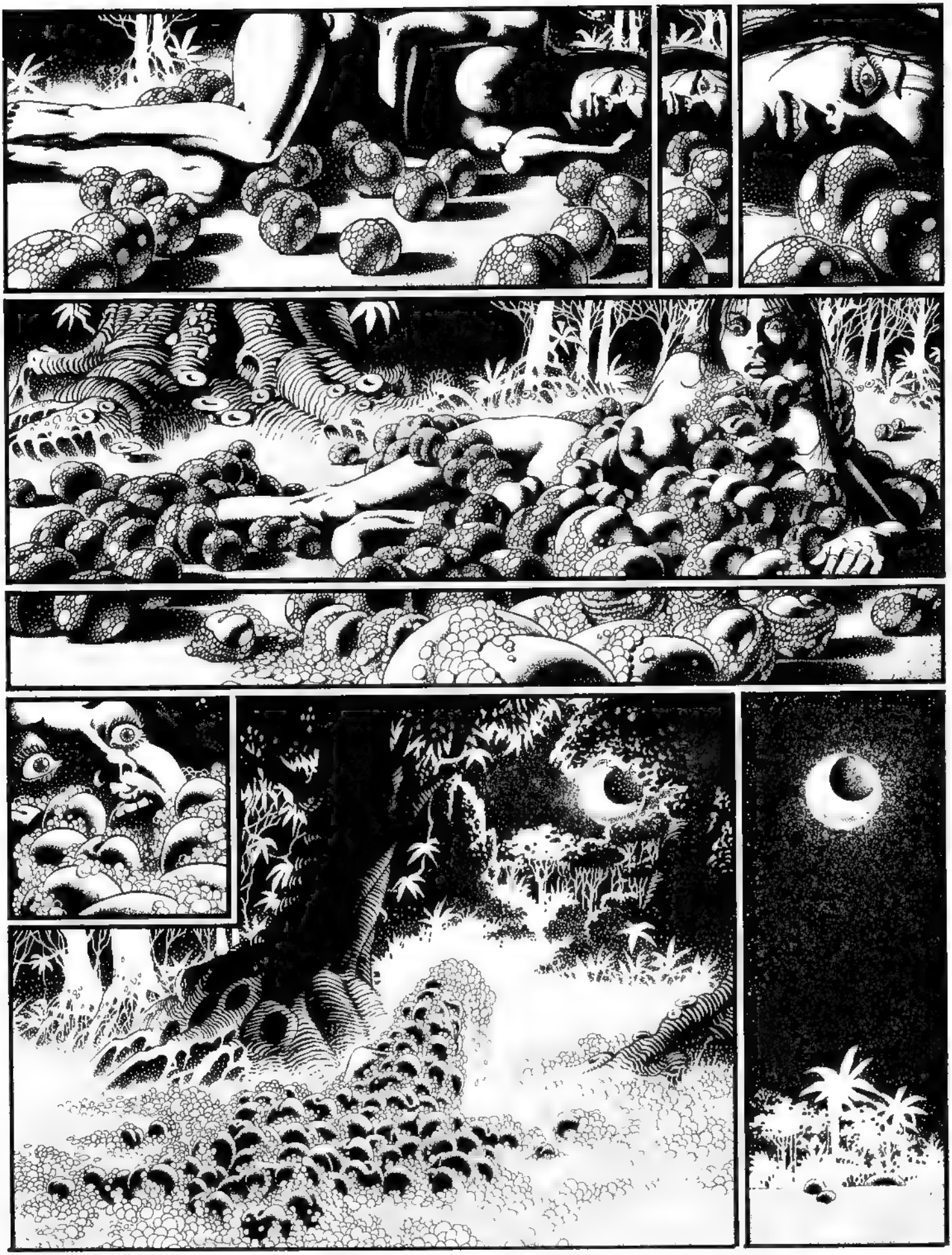

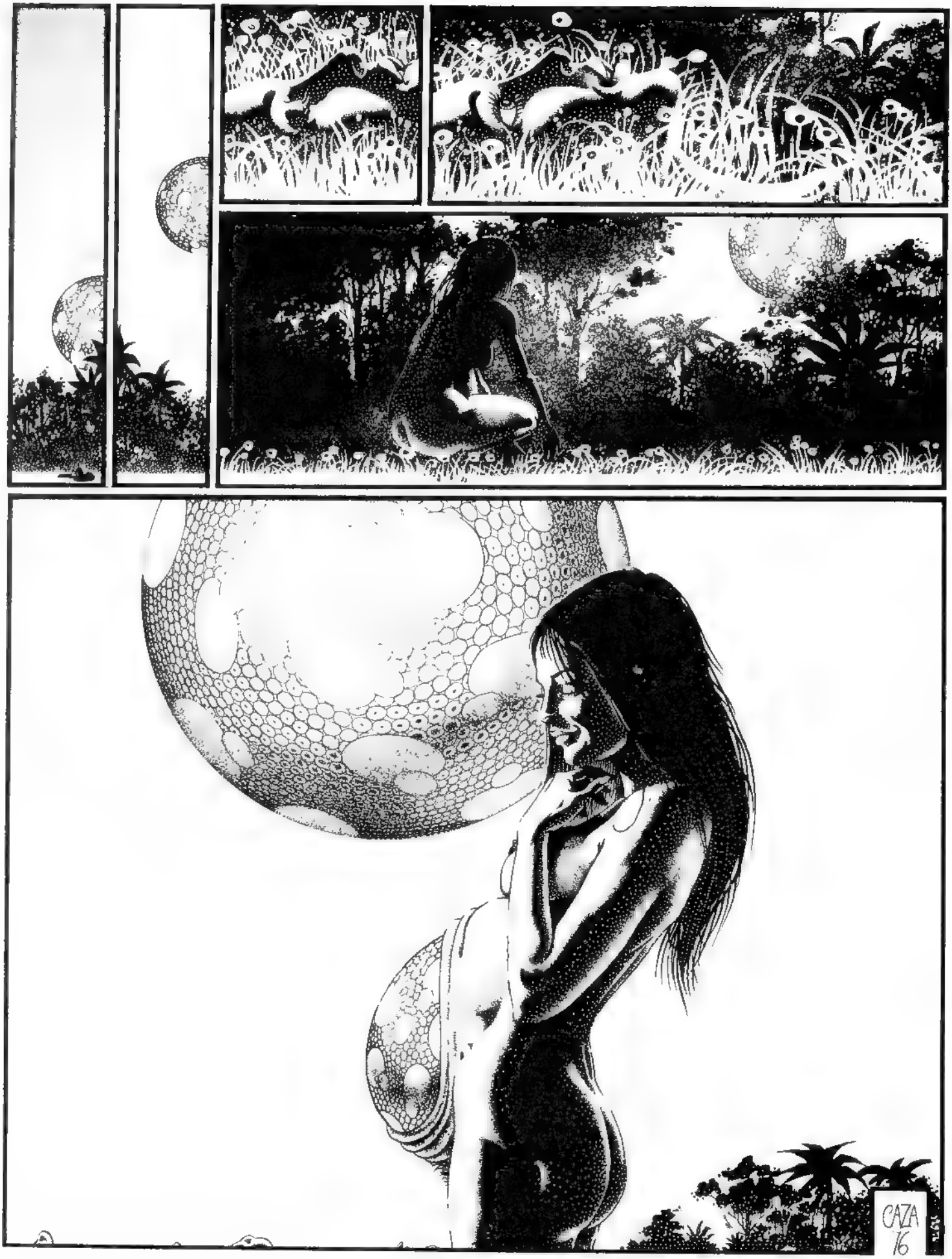
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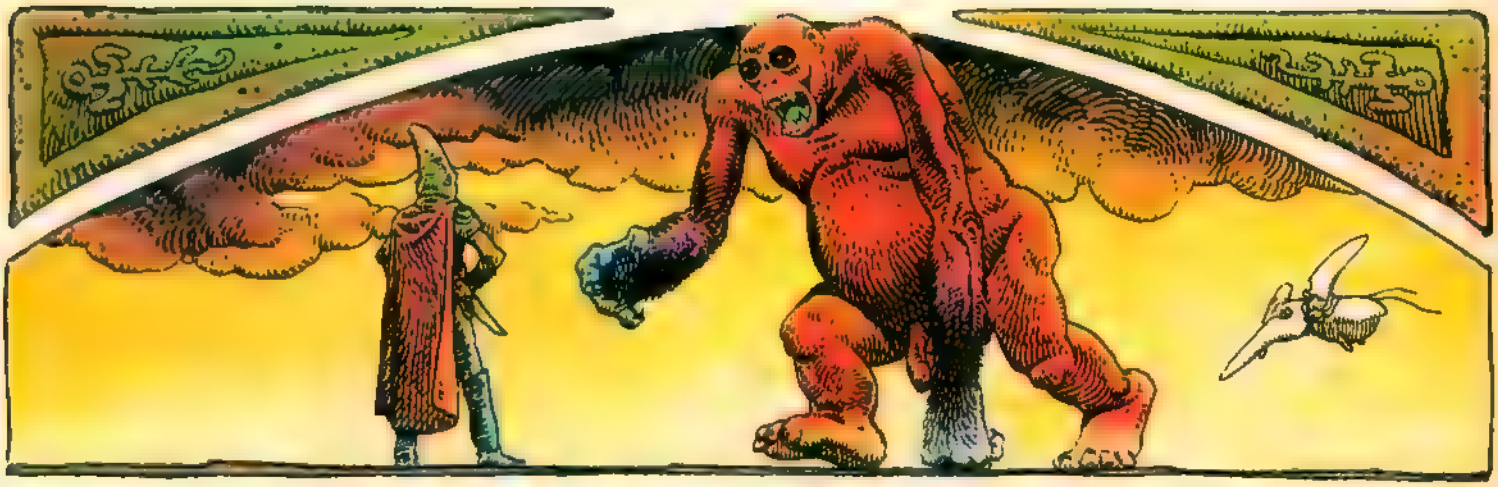


FIN

After plenty of **hassles**, this **dude** managed to get in touch with us so we could listen to the **weird** instrument he had invented.

Finally Harry, our organist, decided to integrate the machine with the group's electronic material.

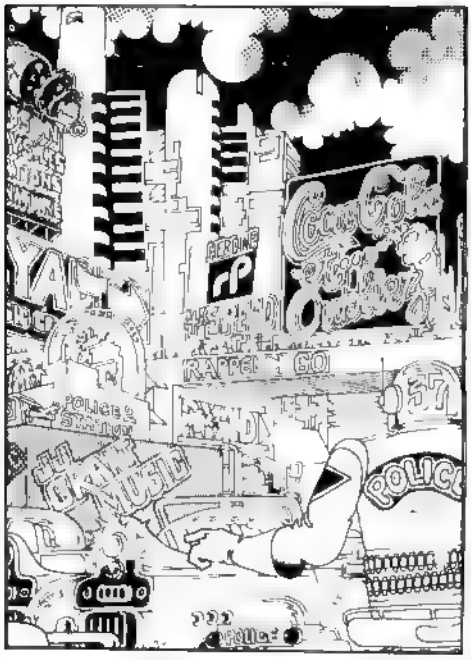
The guy kept rapping to us about **bread**. We told him to hang loose until after **Ryad**, when we would use his engine for the first time.

So, O.K., it was mellow. We'd use the new instrument at **Ryad**!

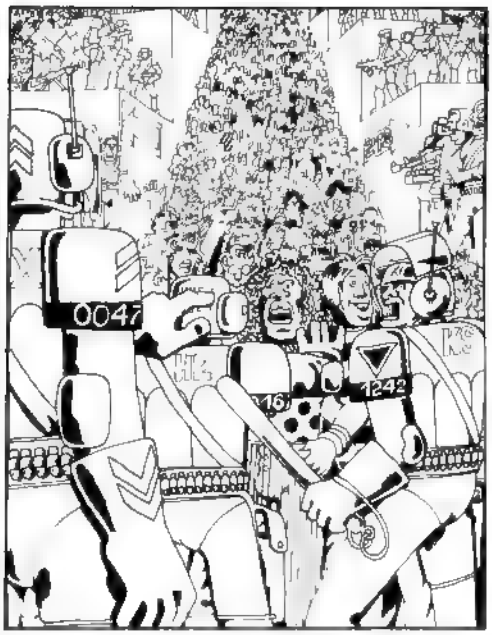
FESTIVAL

The Ryad Festival lasted three weeks ... night and day, **nonstop**, and about **three million freaks** from all over the planet made the scene. That was **Ryad**.

Above the musicians, a giant screen was fed by about a hundred video cameras, which could pick up everything happening on the stage and in the crowd, feeding back its own image to the public... The whole thing was intercut with commercials.

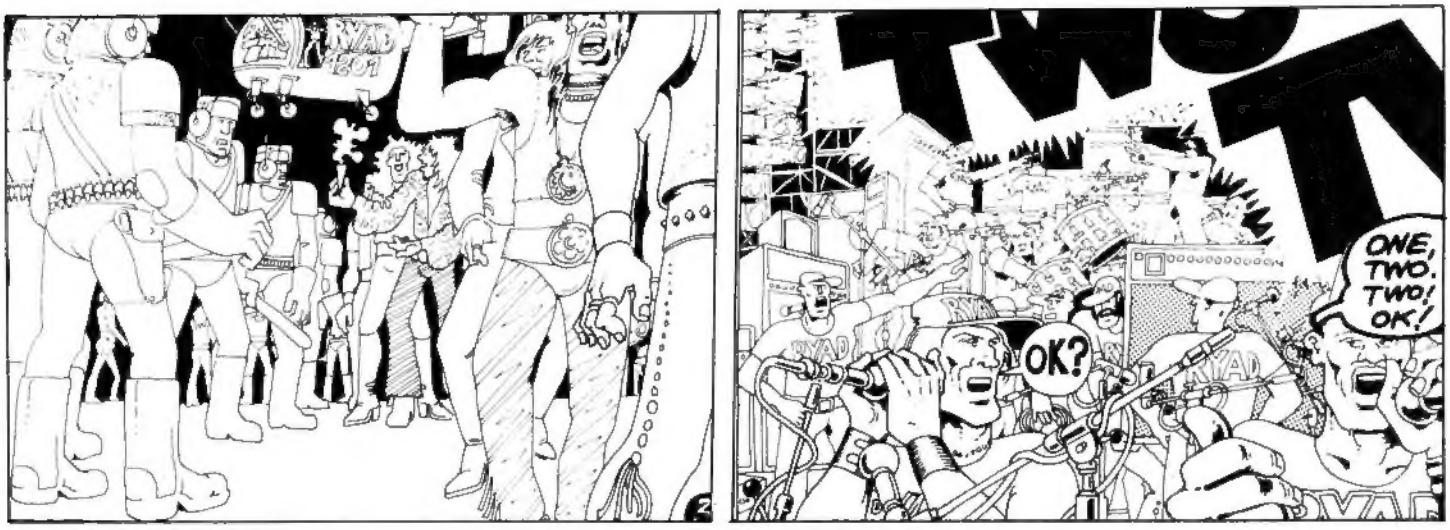


Ryad was also 4 autoroutes with 12 lanes opening onto the Music Center.



6,000 cops cut canals through the human swamp, with an incredible series of locks and concrete passages.

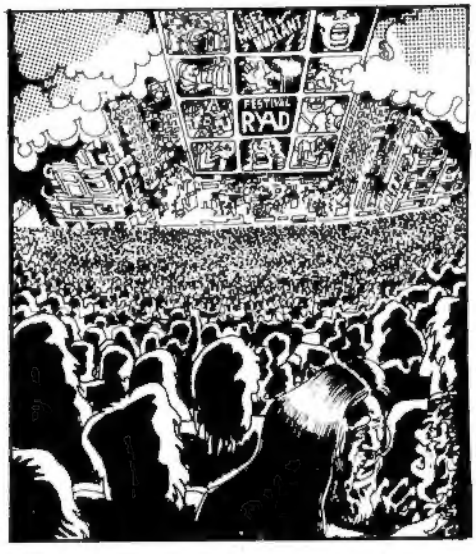
The amplifiers made a web of solid sound, vomiting out a strength of 20,000 watts as far as 3 miles.



At 2:45 P.M., the **helicopter** dropped us down behind the **screen**...the roadies finished putting **14 tons** of equipment into place.

Then we were shoved out under the lights!

At the down beat, they started to **scream**. The crowd was **hypnotized** by the **torrents of sound** pouring out of the amps.



Harry started **riffing** on the new machine, which we had baptized **The Pie-Eyed Pipes!!!**

Jock, our manager, gave Harry the high sign. The **sound** of **The Pie-Eyed Pipes** RIPPED THE SKY WIDE OPEN!

Then the rats showed up...
Just a few at first, then, suddenly...
...millions and millions...
Later... I got an explanation of the phenomenon from a member of the Commission of Inquiry. The Pie-Eyed Pipes, which were found in the debris, were nothing more than an ultrasonic device whose sound at full volume made every rat on the continent of Australia converge on Ryad...
Jin
...there weren't any survivors.
I grabbed the last helicopter and saved my ass!!!

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